

Lunch

Table of Contents

National School Lunch Program	9.1
New Meal Pattern	9.1
New Lunch Meal Pattern	9.2
Menu Planning	9.5
Food Component	9.5
Food Items	9.5
Menu Items	9.5
Point-of-Service	9.6
Crediting Foods	9.6
Age/Grade Groups	9.7
Residential Child Care Institutions, Pre-Kindergarten in Elementary Schools, K–8	
Schools and Small K–12 Schools	9.7
Schools with Shorter and Longer School Weeks	9.9
Menu Planning for Pre-Kindergarten Children	9.10
Meat/Meat Alternate Component of the Reimbursable Lunch	9.12
Definitions for Meat/Meat Alternate Component	9.12
Modifications for the Meat/Meat Alternate Requirement	9.13
Crediting Meat/Meat Alternate Items	9.14
Minimum Amounts to Be Credited	9.14
Using Combinations	9.14
Cooked Dry Beans or Peas (Legumes)	9.15
Yogurt	9.15
Tofu and Soy Yogurt	9.15
Tofu in a Combination Dish	9.16
Purchasing and Crediting Tofu	9.17
Nuts and Seeds	9.17
Shelf-Stable, Dry or Semi-Dry Meat Snacks	9.18
Non-Creditable Shelf-stable Meat Snacks	9.18
Creditable Meat Sticks	9.18
Crediting Low-Fat and Reduced-Fat Cheeses	9.19
Determining the Contribution of a Menu Item to the Meat/Meat Alternate Component	9.19
Steps Before Purchasing Any Meat, Poultry, Fish or Tofu Product	9.20
Non-Meat Alternate Protein Foods	9.20
Enriched Macaroni Products with Fortified Protein	9.21
Alternate Protein Products	9.21
Basis for Crediting Meat, Poultry and Seafood Products	9.22
Cheese Substitutes	9.23
Cheese Food and Cheese Spread Substitutes	9.23
Common Problems: Meat/Meat Alternates	9.23

Texas Department of State Health Services, Division for Regulatory Services, Meat Safety Assurance Unit	9.23
Standards for Meat and Poultry Products	9.24
Fruit and Vegetable Components of the Reimbursable Lunch	9.24
Creditable Amount	9.25
Fruits	9.25
Dried Fruit	9.26
Vegetables	9.26
Mixed Vegetables	9.27
Leafy Salad Greens	9.27
Minimum Amounts to Be Credited	9.28
Pre-Packaged Salads	9.30
Offer versus Serve (OVS) and the Fruit and Vegetable Components	9.30
Specific Requirements Regarding Dry Peas and Beans	9.30
Crediting Salsas or Picante Sauce	9.30
Foods That May Not Be Credited as a Fruit or Vegetable	9.30
Fruit or Vegetable Juice	9.31
Fruit Juice Blends	9.31
Vegetable Juice Blends	9.31
Extruded Vegetable Products	9.31
Common Problems: Fruits and Vegetables	9.32
Grains Component of the Reimbursable Lunch	9.32
Definitions for the Grains Component	9.33
Whole Grains	9.33
Grains and Whole Grain-Rich Foods	9.34
Criteria for Whole Grain-Rich Foods	9.35
Adding Whole Grains to Menus	9.37
Cereal Grains	9.37
Grains and Combination Food Items	9.38
Criteria for Determining Ounce Equivalent Serving Sizes	9.38
Fifty Percent Guideline	9.39
Grains Requirements	9.39
Reminders Regarding Grains	9.45
Determining Daily Minimum and Weekly Maximum Grain Offerings	9.46
Foods That Do Not Qualify as Grains	9.46
Common Problems: Grains	9.46
Milk Component of the Reimbursable Lunch	9.47
Prohibition on Choice of Beverage	9.47
Milk Substitutes	9.48
Milk and Offer Versus Serve (OVS)	9.49
Milk Shakes in the Reimbursable Lunch	9.49
Smoothies	9.49
Common Problems: Milk	9.50

Sulfiting Agents in Foods.....	9.51
Advertising Literature, CN Labels, Product Analysis Sheets and Product Formulation	
Statements	9.51
What is Advertising Literature?	9.53
Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program	9.54
What is a CN Label?	9.54
Federal Inspection.....	9.54
Label Statement.....	9.55
CN Labels for the New Meal Pattern Requirements	9.55
Penalty for Misuse of CN Logo	9.56
Advantages of Using CN Labeled Products	9.56
Authorized Manufacturers of CN Labeled Products	9.57
What is a Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulation Statement?	9.58
Who Reviews and Monitors Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulations Statements?	9.59
General Guidance for Reviewing Product Analysis Sheets/Product Formulation	
Statements	9.60
Point-of-Service Identification.....	9.61
The Reimbursable Lunch under Offer versus Serve (OVS).....	9.61
Senior High School	9.62
Fruit or Vegetable Components	9.63
Elementary, Middle and Junior High Schools.....	9.63
Identifying Food Items.....	9.64
Identifying a Reimbursable Lunch.....	9.64
Counting Food Components.....	9.64
Meat/Meat Alternates	9.64
Fruit and Vegetable.....	9.64
Grains	9.64
Milk	9.65
Pre-Plate Delivery System	9.65
Pre-Package Delivery System	9.65
Multiple Choice Menus.....	9.65
Multiple Serving Stations	9.66
Additional Considerations	9.66
Salad/Theme Bars in Menu Planning	9.67
Salad Bars Questions and Answers (January 2011 Edition)	9.68
Food Production Records.....	9.70
Nutrient Standards Target/Range.....	9.71
Calories.....	9.72
Saturated Fat.....	9.72
Sodium	9.72
Trans Fat.....	9.72
Nutrition Goals	9.73
Nutrient Analysis of Meals	9.73
Weighted Averages	9.74

Determining Projected Servings for Weighted Averages	9.75
Processed Foods.....	9.75
Salad/Theme Bars	9.76
Field Trips and In School Suspension (ISS).....	9.76
Choices	9.76
Substitutions.....	9.76
Standardized Recipes and Preparation Techniques.....	9.78
Water Availability during Meal Service.....	9.78
Location of and Access to Water	9.78
Reasonable Costs of Providing Water	9.79
Providing Potable Water in other School Nutrition Programs	9.80
Food Safety	9.80
Compliance.....	9.80

Chart Table of Contents

Implementation Timeline of the Meal Pattern.....	9.3
Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program(NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)—New Meal Pattern Chart	9.4
Lunch Menu Planning Chart.....	9.5
Lunch Menu Planning Chart—Multiple Components in One Menu Item Chart.....	9.6
Short and Long Week Adjustments for Lunch Chart.....	9.9
Pre-Kindergarten Meal Pattern Chart.....	9.11
Food Buying Guide Specifications for Tofu and Soy Yogurt Chart	9.17
Fruit and Vegetable Components of the Reimbursable Lunch	9.25
What Counts As a Cup of Vegetables Chart.....	9.28
Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart.....	9.41
Grains/Breads Requirement for School Nutrition Programs Chart.....	9.43
Product Contribution Toward New Meal Pattern Comparison Chart	9.52
How to Recognize a Reimbursable Meal Chart.....	9.62
Options for Meeting the Requirement for a Half (1/2) Cup of Fruit and/or Vegetable Component(s) Chart	9.63
Nutrient Standard Chart.....	9.71
Sample Estimate of Number of Servings Needed Chart.....	9.75

Lunch

National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public schools, charter schools, nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) under the administration of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). The NSLP provides economically priced and nutritionally balanced lunches to all students each school day. Contracting entities (CEs) that choose to participate in the NSLP receive reimbursement and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foods (formerly USDA-donated commodities) for each lunch they serve. In return, the CE must serve lunches that meet the meal pattern requirements, and the meals must be offered free or at a reduced-price to eligible children.

New Meal Pattern

School lunches must meet the regulations outlined in the final rule (77 FR 4088) titled *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs*. This rule was established as a result of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010*. The rule was published on January 26, 2012 and is effective July 1, 2012. The new meal pattern requirements differ significantly from the meal patterns based on the *1995 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The new meal pattern outlined in the new rule is food-based only and divided by age/grade group. They focus on specific nutrient standards: calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat.

The following additional changes occur in the new meal pattern:

- A required daily serving of fruit.
- A required daily serving of vegetables plus a weekly requirement for dark green, red/orange, beans/pea (legumes), starchy and other vegetables.
- Increased quantity of combined fruits and vegetables.
- Weekly meat/meat alternate ranges plus a daily requirement.
- Weekly grains ranges plus daily minimum requirements. In the first year of implementation (school year 2012–2013), at least half of the grains offered during the school week must be whole grain- rich. In the third year of implementation (school year 2014–2015), all grains offered during the school week must be whole grain-rich.
- Fat-free (unflavored or flavored) and unflavored 1 percent (1%) low-fat milk only.
- Under Offer versus Serve (OVS), the student must select at least ½ cup of the fruit and/or the vegetable component to be considered a reimbursable meal.

- Calorie minimum and maximum levels based on age/grade groups.
- Sodium reductions.
- Limit on trans-fat.
- Limit on saturated fat only.
- Administrative reviews (formerly known as Coordinated Review Efforts) are on a 3-year cycle.

The Implementation Timeline of the Meal Pattern Chart shows the timeline for the implementation of the new meal pattern for both breakfast and lunch. Implementation of most meal requirements in the NSLP begins SY 2012–2013.

New Lunch Meal Pattern

As stated previously, the new meal pattern for lunch differs significantly from the meal pattern requirements from prior years. The first step toward ensuring the meals served and claimed for reimbursement meet requirements is to understand the new school lunch pattern. Please note that the meal requirements are specified according to kinds and amounts of food for each of the five food components. The Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)—New Meal Pattern Chart provides detailed information on the new meal pattern requirements.

The new meal pattern is food-based only and consists of five components:

- Fruit
- Vegetables (with five vegetable subgroups)
- Grains
(*NOTE: The term “bread” is no longer used.*)
- Meat/meat alternates
- Milk

The meal pattern is divided into three age/grade groups:

- Grades K–5 (ages 5–10)
- Grades 6–8 (ages 11–13)
- Grades 9–12 (ages 14–18)

Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)—New Meal Pattern Chart provides the required components to be served by each age/grade group. Components must meet requirements for both **daily** and **weekly** servings. The nutrient specifications must be met **weekly**.

(NOTE: CEs must use the Traditional Food Based Meal Pattern or the Enhanced Food Based Menu Pattern for Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Children, ages 1–2 and ages 3–4 years.)

Implementation Timeline of the Meal Pattern (B = Breakfast ; L = Lunch; SY = School Year)							
New Requirements	Implementation (School Year) for NSLP (L) and SBP (B)						
	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2022–2023
Fruit Component							
• Offer fruit daily	L						
• Fruit quantity increase (5 cups/ week minimum 1 cup per day)			B				
Vegetable Component							
• Offer vegetable subgroups weekly	L						
Grain Component							
• Half of grains must be whole grain-rich	L	B					
• All grains must be whole-grain rich			L, B				
• Offer weekly grains ranges	L	B					
Meat/Meat Alternate Component							
• Offer weekly meat/meat alternate ranges (daily minimum)	L						
Milk Component							
• Offer only fat-free (unflavored and flavored) and low fat (unflavored) milk	L, B						
Dietary Specifications (to be met on average over a week)							
• Calorie ranges	L	B					
• Saturated fat limit (no change)	L, B						
• Sodium Targets			L, B Target 1			L, B Target 2	L, B Final
• Zero grams of trans fat per portion	L	B					
Menu Planning							
• A single FBMP approach	L	B					
Age/Grade Groups							
• Establish age/grade groups: K–5, 6–8, 9–12	L	B					
Offer Versus Serve							
• Reimbursable meals must contain a fruit or vegetable (½ cup minimum)	L		B				
Monitoring							
• Three-year administrative review cycle		L, B					
• Conduct weighted nutrient analysis on one week of menus	L	B					

Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) – New Meal Pattern Chart (Amount of Food ^b Per Week (Minimum Per Day))						
Meal Pattern	Breakfast Meal Pattern (Required SY 2013–2014)			Lunch Meal Pattern (Required SY 2012–2013)		
	Grades K–5 ^a	Grades 6–8 ^a	Grades 9–12 ^a	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
Fruits (cups) ^{c, d}	5 (1) ^e	5 (1) ^e	5 (1) ^e	2 ½ (½)	2 ½ (½)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^{c, d}	0	0	0	3 ¾ (¾)	3 ¾ (¾)	5 (1)
Dark Green ^f	0	0	0	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^f	0	0	0	¾	¾	1 ¼
Beans/Peas (Legumes) ^f	0	0	0	½	½	½
Starchy ^f	0	0	0	½	½	½
Other ^{f, g}	0	0	0	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetable to Reach Total ^h	0	0	0	1	1	1½
Grains (oz. eq.) ⁱ	7–10 (1) ^j	8–10 (1) ^j	9–10 (1) ^j	8–9 (1)	8–10 (1)	10–12 (2)
Meat/meat alternates (oz. eq.)	0 ^k	0 ^k	0 ^k	8–10 (1)	9–10 (1)	10–12 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups) ^l	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)	5 (1)
Other Nutrient Specifications: Daily Amount Based on the Average for a 5-Day Week						
Min-Max Calories (kcal) ^{m, n, o}	350–500	400–550	450–600	550–650	600–700	750–850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories) ⁿ	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (mg) ^{n, p}	≤ 430	≤ 470	≤ 500	≤ 640	≤ 710	≤ 740
Trans Fat ^{n, o}	Nutrition label or manufacturer specification must indicate zero grams of <u>trans</u> fat per serving.					
In the SBP, the above age/grade groups are required beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014).						
^b Food items included in each food group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving is ½cup.						
^c One quarter-cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than one half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength.						
^d For breakfast, vegetables may be substituted for fruits, but the first two cups per week of any such substitutions must be from the dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes) or “Other vegetables” subgroups.						
^e The fruit quantity requirement for the SBP (5 cups/week and a minimum of 1 cup/day) is effective July 1, 2014 (SY 2014–2015).						
^f Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served.						
^g This category consists of “Other Vegetables” as defined in regulations. The “Other Vegetable” requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups.						
^h Any vegetable subgroup may be offered to meet the total weekly vegetable requirement.						
ⁱ At least half of the grains offered must be whole grain-rich in the NSLP beginning July 1, 2012 (SY 2012–2013) and in the SBP beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014). All whole grains must be whole grain-rich in both the NSLP and SBP beginning July 1, 2014 (SY 2014–2015).						
^j In the SBP, the grain ranges must be offered beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014).						
^k There is no separate meat/meat alternate component in the SBP. Beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014), schools may substitute 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate for 1 oz. eq. of grains after the minimum daily grains requirement is met.						
^l Fluid milk must be low-fat (1 percent milk fat or less, unflavored) or fat-free (unflavored or flavored).						
^m The average daily amount of calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).						
ⁿ Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. Foods of minimal nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.						
^o In the SBP, calories and trans fat specifications take effect beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014).						
^p Final sodium specifications are to be reached by SY 2022–2023 or July 1, 2022. Intermediate sodium specifications are established for SY 2014–2015 and 2017–2018.						

(NOTE: The Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast

Program (SBP) Chart specifies “Amount of Food per Week (Minimum Per Day).” The total amount of each meal component to serve per week with the minimum quantity required per day in the parentheses. Larger servings of fruit or vegetables may be served at meals to improve acceptability, to satisfy students’ appetites, to provide additional energy and, if carefully chosen, to increase the nutritional quality of the lunch.)

Menu Planning

To meet the requirements of the meal pattern, a reimbursable school lunch must contain a specified quantity of each of the food components (meat/meat alternates, fruit, vegetable, grains and milk). The quantities vary by age/grade group. Refer to the Lunch Meal Pattern part of the Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) Chart for information regarding specific quantities per age/grade group.

Food Component

A food component means one of the five food groups which make up a reimbursable meal. The five food components that must be offered to students are meat/meat alternates, fruit, vegetables, grains and fluid milk.

Food Items

Food items means a specific food offered within the five food components.

A minimum of five food components must be offered prior to the point-of-service in order to meet requirements. Fruit and vegetables are now separate food components.

Menu Items. Menu items are the actual foods served such as tacos, fruit salad, and muffins. Menu items may contain one or more components or food items. Understanding the difference between components, food items, and menu items is essential when planning menus that meet requirements. The Lunch Menu Planning Chart provides examples of components, food items, and menu items.

Lunch Menu Planning Chart		
Components	Food Items	Menu Items
1. Meat/Meat Alternate	1. Chicken	1. Southwest Baked Chicken
2. Fruit	2. Peaches	2. Fresh Fruit of the Day
3. Vegetable (dark green)	3. Spinach	3. Seasoned Spinach
4. Grains	4. Whole Wheat Roll	4. Roll
5. Milk	5. Fat Free Milk	5. Milk or Chocolate Milk

Regardless if a menu item consists of one or more components, all five components must be offered in the required amount for the meal to be reimbursable.

The determination of whether a food can be counted as one menu item or two depends on how it is served. If it is served as one item, it is counted as one item. If it is served as two items, it is counted as two items. All menu items must be offered prior to the point-of-service.

Point-of-Service

If a school is not able to put all of the food components (e.g., salad bar) prior to the point-of-service, contact TDA for acceptable alternatives. When food components or food items are located in an approved location beyond the point-of-service, they must be labeled, listed on the menu or otherwise identified so that students can easily recognize all the food components for a reimbursable meal and select the correct quantities. In addition, there must be a system in place to ensure that each reimbursable meal selected by the student under OVS includes at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of a fruit or a vegetable.

All menu items on the serving line must be identified as part of the reimbursable meal. The food items and/or food components that are part of a meal must be labeled, listed or otherwise identified near or at the beginning of the serving line and prior to the point-of-service so that students can easily choose a reimbursable meal.

Many times a menu item will contain only one food component as shown in the Menu Planning Chart. However, a menu item may also contain two or more food components by combining food items as shown in the Menu Planning Chart—Multiple Components in One Menu Item Chart.

Lunch Menu Planning Chart—Multiple Components in One Menu Item Chart		
Components	Food Items	Menu Item
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 oz. eq., Meat/Meat Alternate• $\frac{1}{8}$ cup, Other vegetable (lettuce)• $\frac{1}{8}$ cup, Red/orange vegetable (tomato)• 1 oz. eq., Whole grain-rich grain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beef patty• Lettuce• Tomato• Bun	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hamburger
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 oz. eq., Meat/Meat Alternate• $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, Dark green vegetable (spinach)• $\frac{1}{8}$ cup Red/orange vegetable (tomato)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ground beef• Cheese garnish• Spinach• Tomato	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spicy Tacos
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Fruit: apple• $\frac{1}{8}$ cup Fruit: raisins• $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Grain: oat and whole grain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apple• Raisins• Oatmeal & whole grain crust	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apple Surprise

Crediting Foods

Crediting is determined by rounding the food component down to the nearest quarter 0.25 oz. eq. for the meat/meat alternate and grain components and down to the nearest eighth ($\frac{1}{8}$) cup for fruit and vegetable components.

Age/Grade Groups

The classification of age/grade groups K–5, 6–8 and 9–12 was based on the nutritional needs of children and the ages that typically correspond with the following grade levels:

- Ages 5–10 for grades K–5
- Ages 11–13 for grades 6–8
- Ages 14–18 for grades 9–12

Schools must use the new meal pattern age/grade groups to plan the menus. Due to the three distinct age/grade groups, schools cannot offer the same meal portions to all grade levels. In individual cases where a CE has an unusual grade configuration that prevents the use of the required age/grade groups, it may serve the same lunch to students in grades K–5 and 6–8 as the requirements overlap.

However, in these cases, the CE must be careful to meet calorie requirements for each age/grade group. The CE must meet the lower age/grade group sodium standard when serving meals to more than one age/grade group.

CEs with schools with students in both age/grade groups 6–8 and 9–12 must serve two different meals appropriate for each age/grade group. No customization of the age/grade group in the meal pattern is allowed across these age/grade groups.

(NOTE: Schools are allowed to offer age-appropriate meals to individual students in unique situations.)

***For Example:** A 16-year old child placed in a K–5 educational setting can be served portion sizes for age/grade group 9–12. This would also apply to students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). A CE must follow the IEP for any student that has one.)*

Residential Child Care Institutions, Pre-Kindergarten in Elementary Schools, K–8 Schools and Small K–12 Schools

Residential child care institutions (RCCIs) are **not** waived from the new meal pattern requirements, including the new nutrient standards. To meet the caloric needs of students in RCCIs, the menu planner may increase the calories provided through other meal services such as snacks and the supper meal. Refer to Section 26, Residential Child Care Institutions, for additional information.

If it is not possible to use the established age/grade groups, CEs do have some flexibility.

Some schools are composed of students in Pre-K to Grade 5. Menu planners must meet the meal pattern requirements for students in grades K–5 using the new meal pattern. For Pre-K students, menu planners must follow existing meal pattern requirements as the meal pattern for the Pre-K group has not changed. A menu planner may choose to use a single menu to meet the meal requirements for both Pre-K and grades K–5 if they are able to ensure both the Pre-K and K–5 meal requirements are met.

If a K–8 school is unable to effectively offer different meal patterns for the K–5 students and the grade 6–8 students, the Child Nutrition Director may offer students in these grades the same quantities of the food components because the quantities required by the lunch meal patterns for the age/grade groups K–5 and 6–8 are the same or overlap.

There can be an overlap for age/grade groups K–5 and 6–8; therefore, a single menu can be used to meet the needs of children in grades K–8. The daily minimum requirements for food components are identical. However, in order to accommodate the average daily nutrient limits and weekly minimums and maximums for both grains and meat/meat alternates, CEs must work within the following parameters:

- Eight to nine (8–9) oz. eq. grains per week
- Nine to ten (9–10) oz. eq. meat/meat alternates per week
- Average daily calorie range of 600–650 per week
- Average daily sodium limit of ≤ 640 mg. per week

For Example: The school would have to offer 8–9 oz. equivalent of grains and 9–10 oz. equivalent of meat/meat alternate to all students to meet the requirements for groups K–5 and 6–8. In addition, the meals offered to these students must consist of 600–650 calories to meet the nutrient standards for both groups. Also, the sodium content of these meals, when in effect, must meet the sodium specifications for the youngest group: grades K–5.

Menu planners may not combine age/grade groups for single schools that have grades 6–8 and 9–12. Menu planners must plan separate menus for each age/grade group (6–8 and 9–12) when grades 6–8 and 9–12 are in a single school. Additionally, the new meal pattern does not allow for schools with a grade configuration with one grade above or below the age/grade grouping to follow the predominant age/grade group requirements, which was allowed in previous years.

One way to ease menu planning for CEs with grades 6–8 and 9–12 in one school is to start with a menu that is appropriate for grades 6–8 and then add in a few additional foods to serve to the 9–12 age/grade group. Remember, for the 9–12 age/grade group, the fruit and vegetable minimums must be met. Therefore, on top of the requirements for the 6–8 age/grade group, schools must make the following available to the students in age/grade group 9–12:

- One half ($\frac{1}{2}$) cup more fruit daily;
- One quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) cup more vegetables daily and throughout the week:
 - One half ($\frac{1}{2}$) cup more red/orange vegetables;
 - One quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) cup more other vegetables;
 - One half ($\frac{1}{2}$) cup more additional vegetables (any subgroup).

Another option is to make the full 1 cup fruit and vegetables required for grades 9–12 available to both the 6–8 and 9–12 age/grade groups. There is no maximum requirement for the fruit and vegetable components. The school would use the same menu plan for these two food components, as long as these offerings do not exceed the calorie limit for the 6–8 age/grade group.

For Example: A CE can offer a salad bar to all students. Or, to meet the additional calorie needs of the 9–12 age/grade group, the school could consider an additional ounce equivalent (oz. eq.) of grain or meat/meat alternate to be served to the older children (e.g., additional bread options or a larger entrée serving size).

Schools with Shorter and Longer School Weeks

Schools that regularly serve lunch six or seven days per week must increase the weekly grains quantity by approximately 20 percent ($\frac{1}{5}$) for each additional day. When schools regularly operate less than five days per week, they must decrease the weekly quantity by approximately 20 percent ($\frac{1}{5}$) for each day less than five.

For schools with occasional decreases in the school week length due to holidays, snow days, etc., the menus **do not** have to be adjusted, but menu planners must plan their menus in a way that is consistent with the intent of the meal patterns. Schools should make sure they do not consistently fail to offer certain vegetable subgroups, or offer meat/meat alternates and grains in portions that would exceed the weekly requirements.

Schools that **regularly** operate on a shorter or longer week cycle should refer to the Short and Long Week Adjustments for Lunch Chart when planning their menus to ensure they are meeting the meal pattern requirements.

Short and Long Week Adjustments for Lunch Chart*			
	Grades K–5 Weekly (Daily)	Grades 6–8 Weekly (Daily)	Grades 9–12 Weekly (Daily)
Three-Day School Week			
Fruits (cups)	1.5 (0.5)	1.5 (0.5)	3 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	2.25 (0.75)	2.25 (0.75)	3 (1)
Dark Green	0.5	0.5	0.5
Red/Orange	0.5	0.5	1
Beans/Peas (Legumes)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Starchy	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.25	0.25	0.5
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total	0	0	0
Grains (oz. eq.)	5–5.5 (1)	5–6 (1)	6–7 (1)
Meat/meat alternates (oz. eq.)	5–6 (1)	5.5–6 (1)	6–7 (1)
Fluid Milk (cups)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)
Four-Day School Week			
Fruits (cups)	2 (0.5)	2 (0.5)	4 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	3 (0.75)	3 (0.75)	4 (1)
Dark Green	0.5	0.5	0.5
Red/Orange	0.75	0.75	1.25
Beans/Peas (Legumes)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Starchy	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.5	0.5	0.75
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total	0.25	0.25	0.5

Short and Long Week Adjustments for Lunch Chart*			
	Grades K-5 Weekly (Daily)	Grades 6-8 Weekly (Daily)	Grades 9-12 Weekly (Daily)
Grains (oz. eq.)	6.5-7 (1)	6.5-8 (1)	8-9.5 (2)
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	6.5-8 (1)	7-8 (1)	8-9.5 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups)	4 (1)	4 (1)	4 (1)
Six-Day School Week			
Fruits (cups)	3 (0.5)	3 (0.5)	6 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	4.5 (0.75)	4.5 (0.75)	6 (1)
Dark Green	0.5	0.5	0.5
Red/Orange	0.75	0.75	1.25
Beans/Peas (Legumes)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Starchy	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.5	0.5	0.75
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total	1.75	1.75	2.5
Grains (oz. eq.)	9.5-11(1)	9.5-12 (1)	12-14.5 (2)
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	9.5-12 (1)	11-12 (1)	12-14.5 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups)	6 (1)	6 (1)	6 (1)
Seven-Day School Week			
Fruits (cups)	3.5 (0.5)	3.5 (0.5)	7 (1)
Vegetables (cups)	5.25 (0.75)	5.25 (0.75)	7 (1)
Dark Green	0.5	0.5	0.5
Red/Orange	0.75	0.75	1.25
Beans/Peas (Legumes)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Starchy	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.5	0.5	0.75
Additional Vegetables to Reach Total	2.5	2.5	3.5
Grains (oz. eq.)	11-12.5 (1)	11-14 (1)	14-17 (2)
Meat/Meat Alternates (oz. eq.)	11-14 (1)	12.5-14 (1)	14-17 (2)
Fluid Milk (cups)	7 (1)	7 (1)	7 (1)

* These calculations are rounded to the nearest 0.5 oz. eq. and ¼ cup.

(NOTE: Since the dietary specifications are based on average daily amounts, these are unaffected by varying week lengths, average over the length of the week, whether consisting of three or seven days.)

(NOTE: Due to the size of the weekly vegetable subgroup requirements, the 20 percent is not practical. Therefore, adjustments are primarily made to the "Additional Vegetable" category only, which in turn allows increased or decreased offering amounts of any of the subgroups to meet this requirement.)

Menu Planning for Pre-Kindergarten Children

The new meal pattern requirements are not applicable to Pre-K children. Pre-K children are generally grouped by ages 1-2 and 3-4 for meal planning. Therefore, CEs must continue to follow the food based menu planning charts for Traditional/Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning when planning meals for Pre-K. Schools do have some flexibility when planning the meals. Menu planners may choose to use a single menu to meet the meal pattern requirements for both Pre-K and grades K-5 if they are able to ensure that both the Pre-K and K-5 meal requirements are met.

The meal pattern requirements for ages 1–2 and ages 3–4 (Pre-K children) under the Traditional and Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning are identical. Therefore, the meal patterns for Traditional Food Based Menu Planning and Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning have been combined into one meal pattern chart—Pre-Kindergarten Meal Pattern Chart.

Under the existing Pre-K meal pattern requirements, the fruit and vegetable components are a single component that must consist of 2 or more servings from different sources of vegetables or fruits or both to equal the ½ cup requirement. CEs may use the new component groups under the new meal patterns (separate the fruit and vegetable offerings) and follow the serving sizes outlined for the Pre-K in the existing meal pattern shown on the Pre-Kindergarten Meal Pattern Chart.

Pre-Kindergarten Meal Pattern Chart Weekly (Daily)			
Food Component	Food Items	Ages 1–2	Ages 3–4
Meat or Meat Alternate^{1, 2} (Quantity of the edible portion served)	A serving of one of the following or a combination to give an equivalent quantity:		
	• Alternate Protein Products	1 oz. eq.	1½ oz. eq.
	• Lean meat, poultry or fish	1 oz. eq.	1½ oz. eq.
	• Cheese	1 oz. eq.	1½ oz. eq.
	• Large egg(s)	½	¾
	• Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	⅜ cup
	• Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp.	3 Tbsp.
	• Yogurt, plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened (frozen yogurt is not allowed)	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup
	• Peanuts, soynuts, tree nuts or seeds, meet no more than 50% of the requirement and must be combined in the meal with at least 50% of other meat/meat alternates (1 oz. of nuts/seeds = 1 oz. of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish)	½ oz. = 50%	¾ oz. = 50%
Vegetables or Fruits^{3, 4}	Two or more servings from different sources of vegetables or fruits or both to total	½ cup	½ cup
Grains⁵	Servings of grains must be enriched or whole grain. A serving is a slice of bread or an equivalent serving of a grain (biscuits, rolls, etc.), or ½ cup of cooked rice, macaroni, noodles, other pasta products or cereal grains or a combination of any of the above.	5 servings per week ⁶ (½)	8 servings per week ⁶ (1)
Milk⁷	Fluid as a beverage	¾ cup or 6 fl. oz.	¾ cup or 6 fl. oz.
¹ Must be served in the main dish or the main dish and only one other menu item. ² Alternate protein products (APP) sometimes referred to as vegetable protein products (VPP) and enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used to meet part of the meat or meat alternate requirement. ³ No more than one half of the total requirements may be met with full-strength fruit or vegetable juice. ⁴ Cooked dry beans or peas may be used as a meat alternate or as a vegetable, but not as both in the same meal. ⁵ Enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used as a meat alternate or as a grain but not as both in the same meal. ⁶ For the purposes of this chart, one week equals 5 days. ⁷ Serve a variety of milk. Milk must be fat free (flavored or unflavored) or 1% (unflavored). Milk is measured in fluid ounces (fl.oz.)			

Meat/Meat Alternate Component of the Reimbursable Lunch

To be counted in meeting this requirement, the meat/meat alternates must be served in a main dish or also in a main dish and one other menu item.

	Amount of Meat/Meat Alternates ^a Per Week (Minimum Per Day)		
	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
Meat/meat alternates (oz. eq.)	8–10 (1)	9–10 (1)	10–12 (2)
^a Food items included in each food group and amount equivalents.			

The creditable portion of the meat/meat alternates serving is only the edible portion that is served. The following descriptions help to define a credible portion of a meat/meat alternate:

- Edible portion as served of lean meat, poultry, or fish; or two oz. of cheese; or one egg
- One half cup of cooked dry beans or dry peas
- Four tablespoons of peanut butter or other nut and seed butters
- Four (4) oz. or ½ cup of yogurt; 1 oz. of peanuts, soy nuts, and tree nuts, such as walnuts and nutritionally comparable seeds (not to exceed 50% of the total required amount of meat/meat alternate);
- Tofu and/or soy yogurt
- An equivalent of any combination of the above listed foods

Schools must offer meat/meat alternates daily as part of the lunch meal. The quantity of meat/meat alternates must be the edible portion served. The component must be served in a main dish or in a main dish and only one other food item. Schools without daily choices in the meat/meat alternate component should not serve any one meat alternate or form of meat (e.g., ground, diced or pieces) more than three (3) times in the same week. If the portion size of this component does not meet the daily requirement for a particular age/grade group, schools may supplement it with another meat/meat alternate to meet the full requirement. Schools may adjust the daily quantities of the meat/meat alternate component provided that a minimum of one (1) oz. eq. is offered daily to students in grades K–8 and a minimum of two (2) oz. eq. is offered daily to students in grades 9–12, and the total weekly requirement is met over a five-day period.

Definitions for Meat/Meat Alternate Component

Meat by-products—pork stomachs or snouts; beef, veal, lamb or goat tripe; beef, veal, lamb, goat or pork hearts, tongues, fat, lips, weasands, and spleen; and partially defatted beef fatty tissue or partially defatted pork fatty tissue.

Partially defatted chopped beef (pork)—prepared from fatty trimmings that contain at least 12 percent lean meat (may contain up to 88 percent fat).

Partially defatted beef (pork) fatty tissue—by-product produced from fatty trimmings of less than 12 percent lean meat (contains 88 percent or more fat).

Variety meats—meat by-products (above) except that the term variety meats is used specifically in reference to frankfurters, hotdogs, bologna, and similar cooked sausages. A label that states “Frankfurter with Variety Meats” indicates the use of meat by-products. Yields in the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* for frankfurters, bologna, knockwurst, and Vienna sausage are based on products that contain no meat or poultry by-products, cereals, or extenders. Therefore, these products, if containing “variety meats,” may not be CN labeled.

Modifications for the Meat/Meat Alternate Requirement

The meal pattern allows the offering of the meat/meat alternates as a weekly total with a minimum daily serving size of 1 oz. eq. for grades K–5 and grades 6–8 and 2 oz. eq. for grades 9–12. Menus can have more than one meat/meat alternates at one meal as long as the total equals the daily minimum requirement. The minimum creditable serving is 0.25 oz. eq.

An advantage to having a daily minimum and a weekly requirement is that serving a smaller size of a higher fat meat/meat alternate on one day could reduce the fat level for the menu. In the case of only one daily choice, another meat/meat alternate of a lower fat content could be served in a larger portion during the week to make up the ounce (oz.) difference.

(NOTE: To successfully use this option, planning and production records must clearly identify the daily serving size of the meat/meat alternate.)

For Example: For grades K–5, a school can serve 4 oz. of peanut butter with a ½ cup apples and 4 oz. of yogurt)

(NOTE: Modifications are allowed but the school must still comply with the requirements for OVS.)

The daily quantity of meat/meat alternates can be varied on a daily basis as long as the total amount served over the school week meets the weekly requirement.

For Example: For grades 6–8, 1 oz. eq. meat/meat alternate is the minimum daily requirement. However, serving the minimum 1 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternate every day for a five-day week (1 oz. eq. x 5 = 5 oz. eq.) will not meet the total weekly minimum requirement of 9 oz. eq. To meet the 9 to 10 oz. eq. weekly required range, a CE will need to offer more than 1 eq. oz. of meat/meat alternate on some days.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Total
2 oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.	3 oz. eq.	2 oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.	9 oz. eq.

Crediting Meat/Meat Alternate Items

It is sometimes difficult to determine the contribution various meat products make toward meeting the meat/meat alternate requirement by reading the label. Using the following questions will help in resolving issues related to meat products served in school lunches.

1. What percent of fat is in the meat?
2. If cooked dry beans are used, what is the volume measure?
(NOTE: The serving size of beans is measured by volume, not weight.)
3. If an Alternate Protein Product (APP) is used to contribute toward the meat/meat alternate requirement, is it used in compliance with regulations?
4. Finally, what contribution does the total product make toward meeting the meat/meat alternates requirement?

Minimum Amounts to Be Credited

Small amounts (less than ¼ oz. eq.) of meat/meat alternate used as garnishes, seasoning, or in breading do not count toward meeting the meat/meat alternate requirement of the meal.

For Example: Grated Parmesan cheese used as a garnish over spaghetti or egg used in breading cannot be counted toward meeting the meat/meat alternative requirements. However, the use of such garnishes is encouraged to make the lunch more appealing.

Using Combinations

Using combinations to meet the meat/meat alternate requirement is allowed under NSLP regulations. When doing so, remember that it is more difficult for the cashier to determine if a complete meal has been selected when using OVS.

For Example: The following combinations meet the 2 oz. meat/meat alternate requirement for children in the age/grade group 9–12.

- One (1) oz. cooked lean meat + 1 oz. cheese
- One (1) oz. cooked lean meat + ¼ cup cooked dry beans
- One and one half (1½) oz. cooked poultry + 1 Tbsp. peanut butter
- One quarter (¼) cup cooked dry peas + 1 oz. cheese
- One (1) oz. cooked fish + ½ large egg
- One quarter (¼) cup cottage cheese + ½ large egg
- One and one half (1½) oz. cooked lean meat + ½ oz. cheese
- One half (½) cup soy yogurt + ½ large egg
- Two(2) Tbsp. peanut butter + 1 oz. cheese
- One quarter (¼) cup cooked beans + ¼ cup tofu

However, if combinations are used, they should be merchandised together as a single item.

For Example: A soup and sandwich combo may be offered, encouraging students to select both items.

The meat/meat alternates must be served in the main dish or in the main dish plus one other menu item. This means that two menu items are the maximum number that may be used to meet the meat/meat alternate requirement.

For Example: One oz. of cheese in a grilled cheese sandwich and 1 oz. eq. of chicken in a vegetable soup.

Cooked Dry Beans or Peas (Legumes)

Cooked dry beans and peas (legumes) may be used to meet all or part of the meat/meat alternate component. However, cooked dry beans or peas may also be used as a vegetable. Dry beans and peas (legumes) may meet the requirement for both components in the same meal. However, to count as both a meat/meat alternate and a vegetable, the items must be two different servings—a single serving cannot be credited for both a meat/meat alternate and a vegetable.

For Example: Beans in chili served as the main dish may be credited as the meat alternate or as a vegetable component.

Beans in the burrito may be credited as the meat alternate and an additional serving of beans as a vegetable side dish may be counted as a vegetable in the same meal.

Yogurt

Yogurt may be used to meet all or part of the meat/meat alternate requirement. Four oz. or ½ cup of yogurt fulfills the equivalent of one oz. of the meat/meat alternate requirement in the meal pattern. It may be plain or flavored, unsweetened or sweetened. Noncommercial and/or nonstandardized yogurt products, such as frozen yogurt, homemade yogurt, yogurt flavored products, yogurt bars, yogurt covered fruit and/or nuts, or similar products cannot be credited toward the meat/meat alternate.

Tofu and Soy Yogurt

Tofu and soy yogurt can be offered as a meat alternate in a reimbursable meal.

Tofu does not currently have a standard of identity; however, it is encouraged to use plant-based sources of protein such as tofu. Schools are not required to offer tofu as part of the lunch menu; however, consumption of a balanced variety of protein-rich foods can contribute to improved nutrient intake and health benefits.

For tofu and other soy products to be creditable, it must be commercially prepared and meet the following definition:

Tofu means a soybean-derived food, made by a process in which soybeans are soaked, ground, mixed with water, heated, filtered, coagulated and formed into cakes. Basic ingredients are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.

Noncommercial tofu and soy products are **not** creditable.

In the NSLP, 2.2 oz. (¼ cup) of commercially-prepared tofu, containing at least 5 grams of protein, is creditable as 1.0 oz. eq. meat alternate.

In addition, ½ cup (4.0 fl. oz.) of soy yogurt is creditable as 1.0 oz. equivalent meat alternate. This is the same as the crediting of dairy yogurt when schools use dairy yogurt as a meat alternate.

For Example: *One quarter (¼) cup (2.2 oz.) tofu with ≥ 5 grams of protein is creditable as 1.0 eq. oz. meat alternate.*

One half cup (4 fl. oz.) soy yogurt is creditable as 1.0 oz. eq. meat alternate.

Tofu is commonly used to produce other meat alternate products, such as links and sausages made from tofu. Links and sausages made from tofu can be easily recognized by children as a meat alternate and are creditable if it meets the requirements for tofu.

When considering processed tofu products from links and sausages made from tofu as a meat alternate, the tofu ingredient must contain the required five (5) grams of protein per 2.2 oz. by weight. The additional ingredients beyond the tofu in a meat substitute, such as tofu sausage, are also included on the nutrition label. The protein amount listed on the label for the meat alternate does not necessarily indicate the protein of the tofu for compliance with the meal pattern requirements. Therefore, the CE would need to obtain this information from the tofu manufacturer.

Products made with tofu that are **not** easily recognized as a meat substitute would **not** contribute as any component of the reimbursable meal and do not meet the function of the meat/meat alternate component.

For Example: *Soft tofu that has been blended into a recipe so that it is not recognizable (i.e., in a soup) or does not represent a meat substitute (i.e., tofu noodles) do not qualify as a meat alternate.*

If the amount of protein in the tofu is not listed on the nutrition facts label, it is not creditable. To ensure that the tofu product meets the requirements to be credited in a reimbursable meal, TDA suggests that the CE request that the tofu product be manufactured under the Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program.

Tofu in a Combination Dish

Firm tofu that meets USDA requirements for tofu can be diced into a miso soup and be credited toward the meat alternate component. The miso ingredient, dissolved into the broth of the miso soup, is a fermented soy product that is not creditable as it is not tofu.

Soft tofu, pureed into a soup, is not creditable because it is not recognizable and does not represent a meat substitute. Therefore, the blended tofu is not creditable.

Noodles made from tofu do not represent a meat alternate and are not composed of grains and, therefore, are not creditable for either meat alternate or grains.

Purchasing and Crediting Tofu

One pound tofu with 37 grams of protein = 7.28 quarter cup (¼ cup) servings per pound and provides 7.25 oz.eq. meat alternate.

Refer to the Food Buying Guide Specifications for Tofu and Soy Yogurt Chart for more information on purchasing and crediting tofu.

Food Buying Guide Specifications for Tofu and Soy Yogurt Chart					
1. Food As Purchased	2. Purchased Unit	3. Serving Size per Purchase Unit	4. Serving Size per Meal Contribution	5. Purchase Units for 100 Servings	6. Additional Information
Tofu, commercial* <i>With a minimum of 5 grams of protein per 2.2 oz. by weight (37 grams of protein per pound)</i>	Pound	7.28	¼ cup or 2.2 oz. by weight (1 oz. eq. meat alternate)	13.7	½ cup (4.4 oz. by weight) of tofu X 7.28 quarter cups divided by 16 oz. per pound = 2.00 oz. eq. meat alternate
Yogurt, soy, fresh <i>Plain or Flavored</i>	32 oz. container	8.00	½ cup or 4 oz. yogurt (1 oz. eq. meat alternate)	12.5	
<i>Sweetened or Unsweetened – Commercially-prepared</i>	32 oz. container	5.33	¾ cup or 6 oz. yogurt (1½ oz. eq. meat alternate)	18.8	
	32 oz. container	4.00	1 cup or 8 oz. yogurt (2 oz. eq. meat alternate)	25.0	
<i>No minimum protein level required</i>	4 oz. cup	1.00	One 4 oz. container yogurt (1 oz. eq. meat alternate)	100.0	
	6 oz. cup	1.00	One 6 oz. container yogurt (1½ oz. eq. meat alternate)	100.0	
	8 oz.	1.00	One 8 oz. container yogurt (2 oz. eq. meat alternate)	100.0	
* Defined in 7 CFR 210.2 as “a soybean-derived food...basic ingredients [in tofu] are whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.”					

Nuts and Seeds

Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds can only count as one-half of the meat/meat alternate requirement. They must be combined in the meal with another meat/meat alternate (lean meat, poultry, fish, cheese, large egg, cooked dry beans or peas, peanut butter or other nut or seed butters) to fulfill the requirement. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts cannot be counted as a meat alternate in the NSLP.

For Example: One oz. of chopped nuts served in a chicken dish with 1 oz. chicken or 1 oz. of peanuts

served with a sandwich containing 1 oz.eq. of cheese fulfills the 2 oz. eq. meat/meat alternate requirement.

Shelf-Stable, Dry or Semi-Dry Meat Snacks

Shelf-stable, dry or semi-dry meat snacks are not creditable in the NSLP.

Non-Creditable Shelf-stable Meat Snacks. Non-creditable meat snacks include, but are not limited to, the following products:

- Smoked snack sticks made with beef and chicken
- Summer sausage
- Pepperoni sticks
- Meat, poultry or seafood jerky such as beef jerky, turkey jerky and salmon jerky
- Meat or poultry nuggets (shelf-stable, non-breaded, dried meat or poultry snack made similar to jerky) such as turkey nuggets

The shelf-stable, dried meat, poultry and seafood snacks do **not** meet the usual and customary function of the meat/meat alternate component as either an entrée or side dish of a meal. Also, dried meat, poultry or seafood snacks **do not** qualify for the CN Labeling Program because they **cannot** contribute to the meat component of a reimbursable meal. Fact sheets or company certified product formulation statements **should not** be accepted for these products.

Creditable Meat Sticks. While the above mentioned snacks cannot contribute as a creditable component in a reimbursable meal, there are some meat stick type products that **can** be used in a reimbursable meal.

The following meat stick products may be counted as a creditable meat/meat alternate component in a reimbursable meal with a CN Label or company certified product formulation statement:

1. Cooked, cured meat and/or poultry sausages excluding byproducts, cereals, binders or extenders such as Bologna, Frankfurters, Knockwurst and Vienna Sausage (See the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.).
2. Finger-food types of shelf-stable sticks, usually packed in water, with a parenthetical product name such as “chicken strips packed in water,” are creditable when offered for children one and older, and when made without byproducts, cereals, binders or extenders. These products are similar to Vienna Sausage. They are **not** creditable on the Infant Meal Pattern (ages 0–12 months).
3. Extended meat or poultry “patty-like” products shaped into sticks which are usually breaded and either frozen or refrigerated.
4. Dried pepperoni when used as a topping on a CN Labeled pizza.

Crediting Low-Fat and Reduced-Fat Cheeses

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced regulations/requirements for foods named by use of a nutrient content claim and a standardized term for these products. The regulations allow manufacturers to reduce the fat content of their products and call them “low fat,” “light” or “reduced,” as appropriate, as long as the food is still nutritionally equivalent and otherwise complies with the standardized version.

Low-fat and reduced-fat cheeses are allowed to be credited toward meeting meal pattern requirements in the NSLP on an ounce-per-ounce basis, the same as regular fat cheeses. These products can be served by themselves or in combination with regular fat cheeses. For companies to make low-fat or reduced-fat claims, this criterion must be followed: Low-fat cheese must contain 3 grams or less total fat per 50 grams of product, and reduced-fat cheese must contain at least 25 percent less fat per 50 grams than the regular fat product.

Determining the Contribution of a Menu Item to the Meat/Meat Alternate Component

The following questions, examples, and suggested actions can be used to help in determining the contribution of a menu item toward meeting the meat/meat alternate component.

To use these questions, first, identify the product and then begin with Question 1. If the answer is yes, stop and take the suggested action. If the answer is not yes, continue to the next question until the answer is yes and take the action suggested.

<p>Question 1</p> <p>Is the product made in a kitchen in the CE from scratch? or Do you know the total weight or measure of the ingredients contributing to the meat/meat alternate component (and the fat content when applicable)?</p> <p><i>For Example: Kitchen-made chili con carne, tuna noodle casserole, turkey pot pie and beef patties shaped from bulk ground beef.</i></p>	<p><i>If YES, do this.</i></p> <p>Using the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs and your CE’s recipe for the product, determine if the total amount of meat/meat alternate used will yield the projected number of servings.</p>
<p>Question 2</p> <p>Is the purchased-prepared meat item 100% meat/meat alternate</p> <p><i>For Example: Preformed ground beef patties and unbreaded fish portions</i></p>	<p><i>If YES, do this.</i></p> <p>Weigh the cooked product.</p>

<p>Question 3</p> <p>Is it possible to separate the meat/meat alternate from the other ingredients in the purchased-prepared menu item?</p> <p>For Example: Preformed ground beef patties and unbreaded fish portions</p>	<p><i>If YES, do this.</i></p> <p>Separate the meat/meat alternate from the other ingredients and weigh the cooked meat/meat alternate.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Purchase a CN labeled product.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Secure a company certified product formulation statement before serving the product.</p>
<p>Question 4</p> <p>Is the purchased-prepared menu item a combination of foods from which the meat/meat alternate cannot be separated from the other ingredients?</p> <p><i>For Example: Beef in BBQ sauce, corn dog and breaded fish portion</i></p>	<p><i>If YES, do this.</i></p> <p>Purchase a CN labeled product.</p> <p><i>or</i></p> <p>Secure a company certified product formulation statement before serving the product.</p>

Steps Before Purchasing Any Meat, Poultry, Fish or Tofu Product

Schools should take the following steps before purchasing any meat, poultry, fish or tofu product:

- Request a sample of the product and the product label and be certain that the product purchased with the same label is received.
- Check to see if the label has percentage ingredient listing (request percent labeling on products purchased to know the product's ingredients that contribute to the meal pattern).
- Check to see if the fat content (both total fat and saturated fat) of the meal is listed on the label.
- Check to see if the amount of trans fat is listed on the label.
- Check to see if the sodium content is listed on the label.
- Weigh the actual product to see if the net weight is correct.
- Check to see if the USDA statement verifying the use of the alternate protein product in the NSLP is printed on the label (if the product contains alternate protein product). This statement is not required to appear on meat, poultry or fish labels but often does.

Non-Meat Alternate Protein Foods

Non-meat alternate protein foods include enriched macaroni products with fortified protein and alternate protein products.

Enriched Macaroni Products with Fortified Protein

Enriched macaroni with fortified protein is a macaroni product to which protein has been added. It is not the same as regular enriched macaroni. Enriched macaroni with fortified protein must be combined with meat, poultry, fish, or cheese. Dry enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used to meet no more than 50 percent of the meat/meat alternate requirement. Only products that appear on the USDA listing of acceptable enriched macaroni with fortified protein may be used. The label for these products must have a statement similar to the following:

One ounce dry weight of this product meets one-half of the meat or meat alternate requirements of lunch or supper in the NSLP when served in combination with one or more ounces of cooked meat, poultry, fish, or cheese.

One oz. (28.35 grams) dry weight of this product meets ½ of the meat/meat alternate requirements for lunch or supper of the USDA child nutrition programs when served in combination with 1 or more oz. (29.35 g) of cooked meat, poultry, fish, or cheese.

Alternate Protein Products

Developments in food technology have created new types of alternate protein products that schools can now use. An alternate protein product may be used to resemble and substitute for meat, poultry, or seafood.

CEs may use alternate protein products to fulfill all or part of the meat/meat alternate component for the meal pattern including the use of commercially prepared meat or meat alternate product combined with alternate protein products or the use of commercially prepared products that contain only the alternate protein products. Enriched macaroni product may not be used for infants under one year of age. Alternate protein products may be used in the dry form (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form. The alternate protein product may be used alone or in combination with other food ingredients.

For Example: *Combined food items include beef patties, beef crumbles, frankfurters, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.*

An alternate protein product used alone or in combination with meat or other meat alternatives must meet the following criteria:

The alternate protein product must be

1. Processed so that some portion of the non-protein constituents of the food is removed.
2. Made of safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal source(s).
3. Have a protein biological quality that is at least 80 percent that of casein as determined by Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS).
4. Must contain 18 percent protein by weight when fully hydrated.

For alternate protein products, the manufacturer must

Provide documentation that the product meets the criteria listed above including the percent protein contained in the dry alternate protein product and for the prepared to serve alternate protein product.

For alternate protein product mixes, the manufacturer must

Provide information on the weight of dry alternate protein product in a package; directions for the hydration, and instructions on how to combine the mix with meat or other meat alternates.

Basis for Crediting Meat, Poultry and Seafood Products

Meat, poultry, and seafood products used in the NSLP are credited on the raw basis using the appropriate cooking yields listed in the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. The quantity of the meat must be the edible portions served. This is done to provide equity in crediting different types of products regardless of the cooking methods used or the addition of binders or extenders. This in turn provides for comparable nutritional value (e.g., protein content) of a product when it is cooked by several different methods.

***For Example:** Ground beef patties weighing 3 oz. are cooked three different ways: (1) pan fried, (2) oven broiled and (3) grilled. Their cooked weights are 2.20 oz. eq., 2.75 oz. eq., and 2.63 oz. eq., respectively. If these patties were to be credited according to their cooked weights, Pattie 2 would receive more credit than Pattie 1 or Pattie 3 even though all the patties were prepared with exactly the same amount of meat. The variation in cooked weights is due to differences in fat and water losses with only a minimal loss of nutrients.*

Another illustration of differences in crediting is when 3-oz. beef patties are cooked by the same methods described above but contain 28 percent hydrated soy protein flour. The presence of the soy protein flour will decrease the amount of fat and water lost during cooking; therefore, the cooked weights of the beef-soy patties will be greater than the cooked weights of the all-beef patties. The nutritional value of the beef-soy patties, as served, is not greater. Their higher weights reflect an increased retention of fat and water only.

How to calculate the actual credit that these various patties receive depends not on their cooked weight but on their raw weight and appropriate cooking yield from the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*. In order to provide equity in crediting meat/meat alternate products, regardless of cooking methods, FNS credits meat/meat alternate products on the raw basis and uses the term “equivalent meat” for crediting.

As the above examples imply, the basic concept underlying product crediting is “nutrient concentration” —the amount of nutrients by weight in a finished cooked product. When a product is cooked, fat and water are lost while the essential nutrients are retained in a slightly more concentrated form.

Cheese Substitutes

USDA allows cheese substitutes to be used in the NSLP. Cheese substitutes can be used with another meat/meat alternate or they can be used alone to meet the total meat/meat alternate requirement. One oz. of cheese substitute provides one oz. eq. meat alternate.

Cheese Food and Cheese Spread Substitutes. Cheese food substitutes and cheese spread substitutes would receive the same credit as cheese foods and cheese spreads (two oz. provide one oz. eq. meat alternate). Remember that cheese food and cheese spread are items that have a specific standard of identity. The term “cheese product” is a category name and is nonstandardized; therefore, any item that only has the name “cheese product” would receive no credit toward the meal pattern requirement. Similarly, while substitutes may receive credit in the NSLP, any product labeled as an imitation is not creditable.

Common Problems: Meat/Meat Alternates

1. Meat products with an unknown meat and fat content are being purchased and served as a reimbursable component of the lunch.

Solution: Secure a CN label or company certified product formulation statement before purchasing the menu item. Monitor deliveries to ensure products used are those ordered and documented. Use the USDA Standards for Meat and Poultry Products to determine the content of certain products. This can be found on the USDA Agricultural and Marketing Services website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov> and select Grading, Certification and Verification.

2. The recipe does not include a sufficient amount of meat/meat alternate to yield the predicted number of servings.

Solution: Check all CE recipes against the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs.

3. The menu item is served with the wrong-sized utensils, thus changing the contribution of menu item to the meat/meat alternate component.

Solution: List serving size or proper utensil to be used on production record as well as recipe card. Monitor meal service and production records for unexpected leftovers or shortages.

4. Cooked dry beans or peas are used as meat alternate and vegetable in the same meal.

Solution: When using cooked dry beans or peas as the meat/meat alternate in a menu item, such as chalupas, remember to plan other vegetables in sufficient amounts.

Texas Department of State Health Services, Division for Regulatory Services, Meat Safety Assurance Unit

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Division for Regulatory Services, Meat Safety Assurance Unit, is responsible for administering the meat and poultry inspection program in Texas. All State of Texas meat and poultry plant labels are reviewed by the Labels and Standards Program to assure they are truthful and accurate at the time of approval.

For additional information, contact DSHS
 Meat Safety Assurance Unit, MC 1872
 Texas Department of State Health Services
 P.O. Box 149347
 Austin, Texas 78714-9347
 Telephone: (512) 834-6760
 TDD: 1-800-735-2989
 Fax: (512) 834-6763

Standards for Meat and Poultry Products

USDA standards for meat and poultry products set legal requirements for content, preparation, and labeling before being manufactured and sold in commerce. Standards of identity set specific (and optional) ingredients a food must contain—such as the kind and amount of meat, percent of fat or moisture and additives, if any—when a product is to be labeled or identified by a common product name. To access the standards for meat and poultry products, visit the USDA FNS website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/specs.htm>.

Fruit and Vegetable Components of the Reimbursable Lunch

The Fruit and Vegetable Components of the Reimbursable Lunch Chart provides of the required daily and weekly servings for these components.

Fruit and Vegetable Components of the Reimbursable Lunch Chart			
Amount ^a of Fruits and Vegetables Per Week (Minimum Per Day)			
Component	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
Fruits (cups) ^b	2½ (1/2)	2½ (1/2)	5 (1)
Vegetables (cups) ^b	3¾ (3/4)	3¾ (3/4)	5 (1)
Dark Green ^c	½	½	½
Red/Orange ^c	¾	¾	1¼
Beans/Peas (Legumes) ^c	½	½	½
Starchy ^c	½	½	½
Other ^{c, d}	½	½	¾
Additional Vegetable to Reach Total ^e	1	1	1½
^a Food items included in each food group and subgroup and amount equivalents. Minimum creditable serving amount is ⅛ cup. ^b One quarter-cup of dried fruit counts as ½ cup of fruit; 1 cup of leafy greens counts as ½ cup of vegetables. No more than one half of the fruit or vegetable offerings may be in the form of juice. All juice must be 100% full-strength. ^c Larger amounts of these vegetables may be served. ^d This category consists of “Other Vegetables” as defined in regulations. The “Other Vegetable” requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) vegetable subgroups.			

(NOTE: Full-strength vegetable/fruit juice may not be used to meet more than one-half of the vegetable/fruit requirement. Any product, either liquid or frozen, labeled “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “single-strength juice” or “reconstituted juice” is considered full-strength juice.)

Menu items, such as fruit cocktail and mixed vegetables, are considered as only one serving. However, large combination fruit and vegetable salads, which contain at least $\frac{3}{4}$ cup or more of vegetables and fruits in combinations with a meat/meat alternate intended to fulfill the role of an entree, such as a chef's salad or a fruit plate with cottage cheese, are considered as two or more servings of a fruit and vegetable. The combinations will meet the full requirement if they meet the minimum required amount of each.

Creditable Amount

The minimum creditable amount of a fruit or vegetable that can be credited toward the meal pattern is $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. However, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup is the minimum amount of fruits or vegetables that a student must select for a reimbursable meal under OVS. There are no maximum limits (daily or weekly) on the amount of vegetable subgroups offered at lunch. Schools must offer at least the minimum quantities of all the vegetable subgroups weekly required in the NSLP new meal pattern and ensure that they do not exceed the specific calorie limit requirements.

CN labels will be revised to document the creditable amounts of the vegetable subgroups.

Only whole dried fruits, whole dried fruit pieces, fresh, frozen or canned fruits, vegetables or full-strength juice contributes towards the fruit and vegetable components.

In SY 2012–2013, schools with existing inventory may continue to offer frozen fruit with added sugar. Beginning July 1, 2013, all frozen fruit served must contain no added sugars. Any frozen fruit products with added sugar that the CE has remaining after July 1, 2013 may be used in other USDA Child Nutrition Programs (Child and Adult Care Food Program or Summer Food Service Program), but not in any of the School Nutrition Programs (NSLP, SBP, ASCP or SSO).

Reimbursable meals must not credit snack-type fruit products. Snack type fruit products that are not creditable include the following:

- 100% fruit strips
- Fruit drops
- Other snack-type fruit or vegetable products

Schools may use a food product that contains a non-creditable amount of vegetables (less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup serving), but the school must offer vegetables in the required amounts over the course of the week from other sources to meet the daily and weekly vegetable requirements.

Fruits

Schools may offer the following fruits:

- Fresh
- Frozen without sugar (except as previously described for SY2012–2013)
- Canned in light syrup, water or fruit juice
- Dried

Dried Fruit

Whole dried fruit and whole dried fruit pieces credit at twice the volume served.

For Example: A ¼ cup of raisins contributes ½ cup fruit toward the fruit requirement.

Vegetables

Over the course of the school week, schools must offer all vegetable subgroups:

- **Dark Green**, such as bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens and watercress
- **Red/Orange**, such as acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice and sweet potatoes
- **Dry Beans/Peas (Legumes)**, such as black beans, garbanzo beans, lentils, kidney beans, mature lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans and split peas
- **Starchy**, such as corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes
- **Other Vegetable**, which includes all other fresh, frozen and canned vegetables, such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, bean sprouts, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, parsnips, turnips, wax beans and zucchini

The category of any unusual vegetables may be found at the following links:

- <http://choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables.html>
- <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/USDAFoodPatterns/ItemClustersAndRepFoods.pdf>

Schools are not required to offer the vegetable subgroups at lunch in any specific sequence during the week. The menu planner decides when and how to offer the required vegetable subgroups. Salad bars are a great way to offer the vegetable subgroups. See Salad/Theme Bars in Menu Planning in this section for additional information.

Schools with multiple serving lines with different menu items must offer all the vegetable subgroups each week on each serving line. Doing this ensures that all students have access to all of the vegetable subgroups throughout the week regardless of the serving line selected.

For Example: A child who consistently selects the pizza line would have access to all the vegetable subgroups throughout the week. Another option would be to offer a salad bar centrally located so that all students can access it more easily.

Schools can offer the same vegetable subgroup multiple times throughout the week in small amounts to add up to the required amount for the week. Schools can break up each subgroup requirement across the week as long as the week's menu as a whole meets the full subgroup requirements, **and** each day the school offers the full daily vegetable minimum requirement.

For Example: *To achieve the ½ cup weekly bean/pea (legume) requirement,*

- *One day a school offers a ½ cup of bean/corn salsa that includes ¼ cup of beans per serving.*
- *Another day, the school offers a 1 cup of black bean soup that includes ¼ cup of black beans per serving.*
- *Another day that same week, the school offers a bean burrito that supplies another ¼ cup beans.*

In this example, the school would meet the beans/peas (legume) vegetable subgroup for the week—½ cup for all age/grade groups. However, this example assumes that the CE is providing additional vegetables with each of these meals to meet the daily minimum requirement for the vegetable component.

Mixed Vegetables

Vegetable combinations from the same subgroup (e.g., carrots and sweet potatoes are red/orange vegetables) may count toward that single vegetable subgroup. Vegetable combinations that contain at least ⅛ cup of each of different vegetable subgroups (e.g., carrots and corn) may credit each one toward the appropriate subgroup. To credit mixed vegetable servings by subgroup, the CE must obtain manufacturer-produced documentation that verifies the portion size for each vegetable to be credited by subgroup. If the quantities of each vegetable are not known, the vegetable mixture may count as an Additional Vegetable in the meal pattern.

Leafy Salad Greens

Raw and cooked greens credit differently toward the meal pattern requirements. Raw, leafy salad greens credit at half the volume served, which is consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

For Example: *A ½ cup serving of romaine lettuce contributes ¼ cup toward the Dark Green vegetable subgroup.*

Cooked leafy greens, such as sautéed spinach are credited by volume served.

For Example: *One half cup of cooked spinach credits ½ cup toward the Dark Green vegetable subgroup.*

Iceberg lettuce is not considered a dark green vegetable but a salad that consists of a variety of dark leafy greens (such as spinach or romaine lettuce) does count toward the dark green subgroup.

If the mixed salad contains different vegetable subgroups and the quantities of each subgroup

are known, they can be credited toward each subgroup if the amount served is at least $\frac{1}{8}$ cup. If the quantities are not known, a mixed salad may count toward the Additional Vegetables requirement.

(NOTE: Uncooked, leafy greens count as half of the offering and $\frac{1}{8}$ cup is the minimum creditable quantity that may be offered.

Minimum Amounts to Be Credited

Small amounts (less than $\frac{1}{8}$ cup) of vegetables or fruits used for flavoring or as an optional ingredient, such as a garnish, must **not** be counted toward the vegetable/fruit requirement.

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup for the Vegetable component. The What Counts As a Cup of Vegetables Chart lists the quantity of raw and uncooked vegetables that is needed to count toward a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 1 cup of vegetables served as part of the meal requirements. This same chart can be found at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables-counts.html#>.

What Counts As a Cup of Vegetables Chart		
	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables
Dark Green Vegetables		
Broccoli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup chopped or florets 3 spears 5" long raw or cooked 	
Greens (collards, mustard greens, turnip greens, kale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cooked 	
Spinach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cooked 2 cups raw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup raw
Raw leafy greens (spinach, romaine, watercress, dark green leafy lettuce, endive, escarole)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 cups raw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup raw
Red and Orange Vegetables		
Carrots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup, strips, slices or chopped, raw or cooked 2 medium carrots 1 cup baby carrots (about 12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, strips, slices or chopped, raw or cooked 1 medium carrot About 6 baby carrots
Pumpkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup mashed, cooked 	
Red Peppers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup chopped, raw or cooked 1 large pepper (3" diameter, $3\frac{3}{4}$" long) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 small pepper
Tomatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 large raw whole (3" diameter) 1 cup chopped or sliced, raw, canned or cooked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 small raw whole ($2\frac{1}{4}$" diameter) $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped or sliced, raw, canned or cooked

What Counts As a Cup of Vegetables Chart		
	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as ½ cup of vegetables
Tomato Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ cup
Sweet Potato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 large baked (2 ¼" or more diameter) 1 cup sliced or mashed, cooked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ cup sliced or mashed, cooked
Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, hubbard)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cubed, cooked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ acorn squash, baked = ¾ cup
Beans and Peas		
Dry beans and peas (such as black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto or soy beans, or black-eyed peas or split peas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup whole or mashed, cooked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ cup whole or mashed, cooked
Starchy Vegetables		
Corn, yellow or white	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup 1 large ear (8" to 9") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 small ear (about 6" long)
Green peas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup 	
White Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup diced, mashed 1 medium broiled or baked potato (2½" to 3" diameter) French fries: 20 medium to long strips (2½" to 4" long) 	
Other Vegetables		
Bean Sprouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cooked 	
Cabbage, green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup, chopped or shredded, raw or cooked 	
Cauliflower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup pieces or florets, raw or cooked 	
Celery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup, diced or sliced, raw or cooked 2 large stalks (11" to 12" long) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 large stalk (11" to 12" long)
Cucumbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup raw, sliced or chopped 	
Green or wax beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cooked 	
Green Peppers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup chopped, raw or cooked 1 large pepper (3" diameter, 3¾" long) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 small pepper
Lettuce, iceberg or head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 cups raw, shredded or chopped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup raw, shredded or chopped
Mushrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup raw or cooked 	
Onions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup chopped, raw or cooked 	
Summer squash or zucchini	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup cooked, sliced or diced 	

Pre-Packaged Salads

Many schools offer pre-packaged salads as an option for a reimbursable meal. Pre-packaged salads may or may not contain all of the food components. Depending on the school, students selecting the pre-packaged salad may or may not have the option to select another vegetable component on the line (in addition to the pre-packaged salad). If the school has pre-packaged salads that are complete reimbursable meals and does not allow the student to select another vegetable on the line when selecting a pre-packaged salad, then the week's servings of pre-packaged salad must contain all the vegetable subgroups throughout the week as well as the appropriate servings of fruit, meat/meat alternates and grains.

Offer versus Serve (OVS) and the Fruit and Vegetable Components

Under OVS, schools must offer enough servings for each student to take the full daily minimum requirement for each component (See the Fruit and Vegetable Components for Reimbursable Lunch Chart for daily requirements by age/grade group.). Students must select at least ½ cup of either a fruit or vegetable as part of the reimbursable meal. For additional information regarding OVS and fruits and vegetables, refer to The Reimbursable Lunch under Offer versus Serve further in this section.

Specific Requirements Regarding Dry Peas and Beans

Dry/mature beans and peas may be offered as a meat alternate or as a vegetable, at the discretion of the menu planner. However, one serving may not count toward both food components in the same meal.

***For Example:** One serving of refried beans can be offered as a vegetable in one meal. The refried beans offered as a vegetable count toward the weekly beans/peas requirement, but not toward the meat/meat alternates weekly range in that same meal.*

For additional guidance on beans and peas, see: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/vegetables-beans-peas.html>.

Crediting Salsas or Picante Sauce

Served in amounts ⅓ cup or greater, salsas or picante sauces may be credited as a fruit or vegetable component as long as the product contains all vegetable ingredients plus minor amounts of spices or flavorings. For products that contain non-vegetable components, like gums, starches, or stabilizers, only that portion of the product that is a vegetable ingredient may be counted towards the volume requirement.

Foods That May Not Be Credited as a Fruit or Vegetable

Rice, pasta (macaroni and cheese), hominy and potato chips may not be counted as a vegetable to meet the fruit or vegetable components.

Fruit or Vegetable Juice

No more than one half of the weekly offering for the fruit or vegetable component may be in the form of full-strength juice. Juice may be credited as the volume served, so 4 oz. will credit as ½ cup. It is important to note that for juice to be creditable, the minimum offering per day is ½ cup.

Juice is defined as follows:

One hundred percent full-strength fruit or vegetable juice is an undiluted product obtained by extraction from sound fruit. It may be fresh, canned, frozen, or reconstituted from concentrate and may be served in either liquid or frozen state or as an ingredient in a recipe. Diluted juice is no longer allowed.

Fruit Juice Blends. If the first ingredient in the 100 percent juice blend is fruit juice, then, the 100-percent juice blend can contribute to the fruit requirement.

Vegetable Juice Blends. If the first ingredient is a vegetable juice, then 100%-juice blend can contribute to the required vegetable component as follows:

- Vegetable juice blends containing vegetables from the same subgroup may contribute toward that vegetable subgroup component.
- Vegetable juice blends containing vegetables from more than one subgroup may contribute to the Additional vegetable subgroup category.

***For Example:** A full-strength carrot/tomato vegetable juice blend may credit toward the Red/Orange vegetable subgroup component. A full-strength vegetable juice blend containing carrots, spinach, tomato, and watercress may only credit toward the Additional vegetable subgroup component.*

Extruded Vegetable Products

Meal pattern contributions of extruded vegetable products can be found in the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (Located online at <http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/foodbuyingguide.html>). For any food item not listed in the guide, a company certified product formulation statement should be used to determine the contribution extruded products make toward the meal pattern requirement.

A company certified product formulation statement should meet the following requirements:

1. List the product ingredients.
2. Provide an analysis of product yield and contribution to the meal pattern requirement.
3. State the amount of cooked product that is needed in order to provide a creditable serving.

***For Example:** If prepared in accordance with the label directions, a ⅔ cup cooked serving of XYZ provides ¼ cup.*

4. Signed by a legally authorized representative for the company.

Common Problems: Fruits and Vegetables

Menu planners should be aware of the following common problems related to serving fruit and vegetables.

1. Food items that do not count toward contributing to the fruit or vegetable component are mistakenly used and counted including pasta and rice, which actually contribute to the grains component, and hominy, pickle relish, potato chips, and tomato ketchup, which are considered “Other” foods and do not contribute to the lunch meal pattern.
Solution: When in doubt about what contribution a particular food item makes to the lunch meal pattern, always consult the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (Available at <http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/resources/foodbuyingguide.html>).
2. Juice drinks are mistakenly credited as full-strength fruit juice in contributing to the fruit and/or vegetable component.
Solution: Read the labels of all juice products used in the CE and determine the appropriate portion size and contribution to the lunch meal pattern accordingly.
(NOTE: Some frozen sweetened juice concentrates yield a full-strength juice when diluted one to one. Read the label for directions. Juice drinks are not creditable. Only 100% fruit juice is creditable under the lunch meal pattern.)
3. Breaded or extruded fruit or vegetable items are served and credited before a determination of the contribution of the product to the lunch meal pattern has been made including breaded okra, onion rings and squash. Extruded items include a variety of vegetables or fruits combined with other ingredients and are often breaded.
Solution: Take the following actions—
 - *Determine the contribution of breaded products by removing the breading of the cooked product and measuring the volume of vegetable; document findings.*
 - *Determine the contribution of extruded products by obtaining a company certified product formulation statement before serving.*

Grains Component of the Reimbursable Lunch

The daily minimum lunch requirement of grains over a five-day week is as follows.

Grains (oz. eq.)*	Amount of Grains Per Week (Minimum Per Day)		
	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
	8–9 (1)	8–10 (1)	10–12 (2)
* At least half of the grains offered must be whole grain-rich beginning July 1, 2012 (SY 2012–2013). All whole grains must be whole grain-rich beginning July 1, 2014 (SY 2014–2015).			

During this period, the menu planner has discretion to decide when and how to offer whole grain-rich items, as long as the applicable whole grains-rich requirement is met. Menu planners are encouraged to offer whole grain-rich items often to help with student acceptability and the transition to all whole grain-rich products in SY 2014–2015.

Definitions for the Grains Component

Bran—the seed husk or outer coating of cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and oats.

Breakfast Cereal—any cereal grain served in a cold and dry form. Breakfast cereals are traditionally served as a breakfast menu item but may be served in meals other than breakfast.

Cereal Grain—edible part of a whole grain that has been processed for consumption.

Corn—product labeled as “Whole corn” (or other “whole” corn designations, such as whole grain corn, whole ground corn, whole cornmeal, whole corn flour, etc.) or “enriched” corn (or other “enriched” corn designations, such as enriched yellow cornmeal, enriched corn flour, enriched corn grits, etc.).

Enriched—product conforms to the Food and Drug Administration’s Standard of Identity for levels of iron, thiamin, riboflavin and niacin. The terms “enriched,” “fortified” or similar terms indicate the addition of one or more vitamins or minerals or protein to a food, unless an applicable federal regulation requires the use of specific words or statements. Whole-grain flour or meal is the product derived by grinding the entire grain minus the husk/hull. If a flour or meal does not contain all edible parts of the grain, it is not whole-grain.

Flour—product derived by finely grinding and bolting (sifting) wheat or other grains. Flour includes all grains (wheat, rye, corn, etc.).

Meal—is the product derived by coarsely grinding corn, oats, wheat, etc.

Whole-grain—is the edible part of wheat, corn, rice, oats, rye, barley, etc. Parts of the grains such as the germ or the bran are not considered whole-grain.

Whole Grains

Whole grains consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel. The kernel has three parts:

1. The bran
2. The germ
3. The endosperm

If the finished product retains the same relative proportions of bran, germ and endosperm as the original grain, it is considered a whole grain.

The following whole grains are allowed:

Barley

- Whole barley
- Whole-grain barley
- Whole-barley flakes
- Whole-barley flour
- Whole-grain barley flour

Corn

- Whole corn
- Whole-corn flour
- Whole-grain corn flour
- Whole-grain cornmeal
- Whole cornmeal

Oats

- Whole oats
- Oat groats
- Oatmeal or rolled oats
- Whole-oat flour

Rice

- Brown rice
- Brown rice flour

Rye

- Whole rye
- Rye berries
- Whole-rye flour
- Whole-rye flakes

Wheat

- Wheat berries
- Whole-grain wheat
- Cracked wheat
- Whole-wheat flour
- Graham flour
- Whole durum flour
- Sprouted wheat
- Bulgur
- White whole wheat flour

Wild Rice

- Wild rice
- Wild rice flour

The following grain products are **not** allowed:

- Products made from processed grains that are not enriched
- Products not designated as “enriched” or “whole grain”
- Products not designated as made from enriched or whole grain meal or flour, bran, or grain
- Grits made from hominy

Grains and Whole Grain-Rich Foods

Quantities of grains in the meal patterns for the NSLP are based on oz. eq. Using oz. eq. is consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance system (MyPlate). All grains must be whole grain-rich by SY 2014–2015. Although CEs are not required to serve a whole grain-rich item daily in SY 2013–2014, they are encouraged to do so to prepare for the shift to all whole grain-rich grains beginning SY 2014–2015.

Whole grain-rich foods must meet (1) the serving size requirements for grains and (2) meet at least one of the following:

- Whole grains per serving must be ≥ 8 grams.
- The product must include FDA’s whole grain health claim on its packaging.
- The product ingredient listing lists “whole grain” first.

Schools must not exceed the upper ranges of the grains components. The grains ranges are the minimum and maximum schools may offer. They are intended to help schools offer age-appropriate meals within the required calorie ranges. Schools may count up to two oz. eq. of grain-based desserts per week towards meeting the grains requirement.

Criteria for Whole Grain-Rich Foods

Implementation Timeline

SY 2012–2013

Half (50%) of the grains offered during the school week must meet the whole grain-rich criteria. Therefore, schools do not have to offer a whole grain item daily, but half of the grains offered during the school week must be a whole grain. Through SY 2013–2014, CEs should continue to refer to Section 3, Grains/Breads of the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*.

SY 2013–2014

All grains equal to or greater than 0.25 oz. eq. must be counted toward the weekly grain range (including battered and breaded products).

SY 2014–2015

All grains offered during the school week must meet the whole grain-rich criteria beginning July 1, 2014.

Foods that qualify as whole grain-rich for the NSLP are foods that contain 100 percent whole grain or contain a blend of whole-grain meal and/or flour and enriched meal and/or flour, of which at least 50 percent is whole grain.

Whole grain-rich products must contain at least 50 percent whole-grains and the remaining grain, if any, must be enriched.

CEs can use the following elements as a simple checklist to determine if a grain product meets the whole grain-rich criteria:

Element 1: The food item must meet the portion size requirements for grains/breads component as defined in FNS guidance. See the Lunch Meal Pattern Chart for detailed specifications on the requirements by age/grade group.

Element 2: The food must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a. The whole-grains per serving must be ≥ 8 grams.¹
- b. The products includes the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved whole-grain health claim on its packaging:
Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.
- c. The product ingredient declaration lists whole grains first, specifically as follows:²
 - 1) Non-mixed dishes (e.g., breads, cereals): whole grains must be the primary ingredient by weight (a whole grain is the first ingredient in the list with an exception for water).
 - 2) Mixed dishes (e.g. pizza, corn dogs): Whole grains must be the primary grain ingredient by weight (a whole grain is the first grain ingredient in the list).

Flour blends are listed in the ingredient list and grouped together with parentheses as in the following example.

For Example: *Flour blend (whole wheat flour, enriched flour), sugar, cinnamon, etc.*

The menu planner will need to know whether the whole grain content is at least 8.0 grams per oz. eq. or that the weight of the whole grain is greater than the first ingredient listed after the flour blend, such as the sugar in the example.

A ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal must list a whole grain as the primary ingredient and the RTE cereal must be fortified. If the grain product included enriched ingredients, or the product itself is enriched, the ingredients or the grain product must meet the FDA's standard of identity for enrichment (found in 21 CFR 137). Bran and germ are not creditable in NSLP. Non-creditable grain ingredients in products at very low levels used as processing aids are allowable at levels less than 2 percent.

Manufacturers may apply for a CN Label for qualifying products to indicate the number of oz. eq. grains that meet the whole grain-rich criteria. The term "oz. eq. grains" on the CN

¹ This may be determined from information provided on the product packaging or by the manufacturer, if available. Also, manufacturers may apply for a CN Label for qualifying products to indicate the number of grains/breads serving that are whole grain rich.

² The product ingredient declaration is a practical way for CEs to identify whole grain-rich products because manufacturers are not required to provide information about the grams of whole grains in their products, and the FDA whole grain health claim is not mandatory. Detailed instructions for this method appear in the *HealthierUS School Challenge Whole Grain Resource* guide, which is available online at http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/healthierUS/HUSSCkit_pp25-35.pdf. FNS will provide additional guidance as necessary.

Label indicates the product meets the whole grain-rich criteria, while the terms “bread” or “bread alternate” on the CN Label indicates the product meets previous NSLP requirements for grains/breads. Refer to the CN Labeling Program website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cns/cnlabeling> for details regarding qualifying products.

Products with a CN Label that meet the whole grain-rich criterion will report the contribution of the grain product.

For Example: *The label may say that the grain “provides X.X servings of whole grain-rich (or WGR) grains for Child Nutrition Programs.”*

Also, temporary CN Label approvals (expiring June 30, 2014) will be issued for CN Label applications containing crediting for grains that are not considered whole grain-rich. The temporary CN Labels will continue to state that a grain “provides X servings of bread or bread alternate” or “X servings of WGR grains” so that SNP staff will be able to distinguish between the whole grain-rich claims and the non-whole grain-rich claims. The labels will expire June 30, 2014 in order to give adequate time for manufacturers to reformulate products to meet the whole grain-rich requirements by June 30, 2014.

Adding Whole Grains to Menus

Menu planners should be creative when adding whole grain foods to menus. The following are examples of whole grain-rich products that can be incorporated into menus:

- Whole grain-rich ready-to-eat or cooked breakfast cereals
- Whole grain-rich Granola or granola bars
- Whole grain-rich pancakes or waffles
- Whole grain-rich bagels, breads, rolls, buns or muffins
- Whole grain-rich tortillas or taco shells
- Whole grain-rich pretzels
- Whole grain-rich pita pockets
- Whole grain-rich cornbread
- Whole grain-rich crackers or cookies

Cereal Grains

Grain products, such as enriched corn grits and enriched rice, that do not include whole grains will **not** be creditable as a single ingredient beginning SY 2014–2015 (July 1, 2014).

Grain products that are at least 50% whole grain blended with not more than 50% enriched grain will continue to be creditable.

For Example:

- *Fourteen (14) grams of dry brown rice blended with 14 grams dry enriched rice is 1.0 oz. eq. grain that meets the whole grain-rich criteria.*
- *A quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) cup cooked brown rice blended with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked enriched rice is 1.0 oz. eq. grain that meets the whole grain-rich criteria.*

Grains and Combination Food Items

Every reimbursable meal offered must meet the daily minimum requirement for all components, including combination food items. Therefore, if a combination food is offered, such as a pizza that contains adequate grains to meet the minimum daily requirement, but a sandwich roll does not, the sandwich meal must contain another grain in order to meet the minimum daily grains requirement.

Criteria for Determining Ounce Equivalent Serving Sizes

The requirement for whole grain-rich grain products to be based on oz. eq. will become effective on July 1, 2012 (SY 2012–2013). It is understood that menu planners and manufacturers may need additional time to change specifications and revise products. CEs may continue credit grain products based on the current 14.75 grams of grains per serving through SY 2012–2013. All grain products must be credited based on per oz. eq. standards beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013–2014).

All grains offered in amounts of 0.25 oz. eq. (the minimum creditable amount) or greater must be included in the calculation of daily and weekly grain offerings, as well as in the dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat and sodium). Because of the phase-in of the whole grain-rich requirement in the first two years of implementation (SY 2013 and SY 2014), non-whole-grain-rich grains may be offered on the serving line. Beginning July 1, 2014, all grains offered in creditable amounts on the serving line **must** be whole grain-rich. Non-creditable grain ingredients in products used at very low levels as processing aids are allowable at levels less than 2 percent.

The criteria to credit various grain products on the oz. eq. standards are as follows:

- Baked goods, such as breads, biscuits, bagels, etc., require 16 grams of creditable grain ingredients in order to provide 1 oz. eq. credit.
- For cereal grains, such as oatmeal, pasta and brown rice, a 1-oz. eq. is 28 grams (approximately 1.0 oz. by weight) of dry product. Since these grains are served cooked and water is added in preparation, the cooked volume equivalent is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked cereal, pasta or rice.
- For ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereal, 28 grams or 1.0 oz. of product is considered an oz. eq. The oz. eq. volumes are 1 cup flakes or rounds, 1.25 cups puffed cereal, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granola.

The new meal pattern provides a minimum and maximum number of oz. eq. to meet a weekly grains requirement by age/grade group. All grains offered should be counted toward meeting these minimum and maximum requirements using the oz. eq. or “bread” or “bread alternate” criteria in the interim. Of the weekly total for lunch, up to 2.0 oz. eq. grains per week may be in the forms of a grain-based dessert.

During SY 2012-2013, battered and/or breaded products offered do not need to be counted toward the maximum weekly grain requirements in the meal pattern. If the batter or breading or product is credited toward the minimum daily requirement, then, it must be counted toward the maximum weekly requirement. Beginning July 1, 2013 (SY 2013-2014), all grains that are part of battered and/or breaded products offered **must** be counted towards the weekly grain requirement.

Fully cooked grain and pasta items with nutrition labels that have water as the first ingredient, followed by a whole grain are considered whole-grain rich. According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a grain-based product is also considered whole grain-rich if water is listed as the first ingredient on the ingredient label and a whole grain is listed as the second ingredient on the ingredient label.

Fifty Percent Guideline

The 50 percent guideline for whole grain-rich requires that if the food item is a grain-based product (bread, cereal, etc.) it must contain 50 percent or more whole grains by weight or have a whole grain listed as the first ingredient on the ingredient label. If the food item is a mixed dish product (lasagna, stir fry, etc.) a whole grain must be the primary grain ingredient by weight. The CN Label program will be updated to report the whole grain-rich contributions to the grains component.

Grains Requirements

The Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart provides oz. eq. information for products commonly offered in schools. CEs have the flexibility to use a wide range of products in planning meals which meet the lunch meal pattern and nutrition specifications. CEs are strongly encouraged to offer food items that are low in added sugars, sodium and saturated fat in order to meet the meal pattern requirements and nutrition specifications and to provide foods that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

(NOTE: The listing of food items in the Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart is not all inclusive.)

The contribution of grains in a recipe or product formulation for items listed in the Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart Groups A-G may be calculated to determine the number of oz. eq. of grains the recipe provides based on 16 grams of grain ingredients per oz. eq. The crediting of a food item as oz. eq. of grains is determined by the total amount in grains of whole-grain meal and/or flours or whole-grain and

enriched meal and/or flour in the product formulation or recipe divided by the number of servings the formulation or recipe yields divided by the 16 grams per oz. eq. standard. For Groups H and I to count as one full serving, the weights or volumes listed must be used.

A measurement of 0.25 oz. eq. is the **smallest** amount allowable to be credited toward the quantities of grains. If the minimum daily requirement for grains is 1 oz. eq., this minimum can be met by offering multiple food items.

***For Example:** A combination of 0.5 oz. eq. of one grain item and 0.5 oz. eq. of another grain item*

The oz. eq. for grains may be determined by using either the weights or volumes listed in the Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart. Or, the CE may require documentation from a manufacturer certifying the grams of creditable grains per portion for determining the oz. eq. from a given product.

The Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart contains the equivalent minimum weights for a wide variety of purchased food items to meet the oz. eq. criteria. CEs may use this chart instead of calculating the actual amounts of grains in a product since it provides the equivalent minimum weights to provide 1 oz. eq. of grains. Since the grains requirement does not go into full effect until July 1, 2014 (SY 2014–2015), the Grains/Breads Requirements for School Nutrition Programs Chart may still be used to credit grains.

The crediting of a food item as oz. eq. grains is determined by

Grams whole-grain meal and/or flour	or	Grams whole-grain <u>plus</u> enriched meal and/or flour
		÷
		Number of servings the formulation or recipe yields
		÷
		16 grams per oz. eq. standard

(NOTE: CEs should select to use either the Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart which credits grain products based on the 16 grams of grains per serving or the Grains/Breads Requirements for School Nutrition Programs Chart which credits grain products based on the 14.75 grams of grains per serving.)

The following Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart will help CEs that conform to the new grain requirements based on 16 grams of grains per serving beginning in SY 2012–2013. It can be used to determine the whole grain-rich oz. eq. for grains. All CEs **must** use this chart beginning SY 2013–2014.

Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart^{1, 2} (Using 16 Grams of Grains per Serving) Recommended for SY 2012–2013, Required SY 2013–2014	
Group A	Oz. Eq. for Group A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread type coating • Bread sticks (hard) • Chow mein noodles • Savory Crackers (saltines and snack crackers) • Croutons • Pretzels (hard) • Stuffing (dry) Note: weights apply to bread in stuffing. 	1 oz. eq. = 22 gm. or 0.8 oz. $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. eq. = 17 gm. or 0.6 oz. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq. = 11 gm. or 0.4 oz. $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. eq. = 6 gm. or 0.2 oz.
Group B	Oz. Eq. for Group B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bagels • Batter type coating • Biscuits • Breads (sliced whole wheat, French, Italian) • Buns (hamburger and hot dog) • Sweet Crackers⁴ (graham crackers - all shapes, animal crackers) • Egg roll skins • English muffins • Pita bread (whole wheat or whole grain-rich) • Pizza crust • Pretzels (soft) • Rolls (whole wheat or whole grain-rich) • Tortillas (whole wheat or whole corn) • Tortilla chips (whole wheat or whole corn) • Taco shells (whole wheat or whole corn) 	1 oz. eq. = 28 gm. or 1.0 oz. $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. eq. = 21 gm. or 0.75 oz. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq. = 14 gm. or 0.5 oz. $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. eq. = 7 gm. or 0.25 oz.
Group C	Oz. Eq. for Group C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookies³ (plain - includes vanilla wafers) • Cornbread • Corn muffins • Croissants • Pancakes • Pie crust (dessert pies³, cobbler³, fruit turnovers⁴, and meat/meat alternate pies) • Waffles 	1 oz. eq. = 34 gm. or 1.2 oz. $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. eq. = 26 gm. or 0.9 oz. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. eq. = 17 gm. or 0.6 oz. $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. eq. = 9 gm. or 0.3 oz.

**Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the
School Nutrition Programs Chart^{1, 2}** (Using 16 Grams of Grains per Serving)
Recommended for SY 2012–2013, Required SY 2013–2014

Group D	Oz. eq. for Group D
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doughnuts⁴ (cake and yeast raised, unfrosted) Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars⁴ (plain) Muffins (all, except corn) Sweet roll⁴ (unfrosted) Toaster pastry⁴ (unfrosted) 	1 oz. eq. = 55 gm. or 2.0 oz. ¾ oz. eq. = 42 gm. or 1.5 oz. ½ oz. eq. = 28 gm. or 1.0 oz. ¼ oz. eq. = 14 gm. or 0.5 oz.
Group E	Oz. eq. for Group E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars⁴ (with nuts, dried fruit, and/or chocolate pieces) Cookies³ (with nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces and/or fruit purees) Doughnuts⁴ (cake and yeast raised, frosted or glazed) French toast Sweet rolls⁴ (frosted) Toaster pastry⁴ (frosted) 	1 oz. eq. = 69 gm. or 2.4 oz. ¾ oz. eq. = 52 gm. or 1.8 oz. ½ oz. eq. = 35 gm. or 1.2 oz. ¼ oz. eq. = 18 gm. or 0.6 oz.
Group F	Oz. Eq. for Group F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cake³ (plain, unfrosted) Coffee cake⁴ 	1 oz. eq. = 82 gm. or 2.9 oz. ¾ oz. eq. = 62 gm. or 2.2 oz. ½ oz. eq. = 41 gm. or 1.5 oz. ¼ oz. eq. = 21 gm. or 0.7 oz.
Group G	Oz. Eq. for Group G
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brownies³ (plain) Cake³ (all varieties, frosted) 	1 oz. eq. = 125 gm. or 4.4 oz. ¾ oz. eq. = 94 gm. or 3.3 oz. ½ oz. eq. = 63 gm. or 2.2 oz. ¼ oz. eq. = 32 gm. or 1.1 oz.
Group H	Oz. Eq. for Group H
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cereal Grains (barley, quinoa, etc.) Breakfast cereals (cooked)^{5, 6} Bulgur or cracked wheat Macaroni (all shapes) Noodles (all varieties) Pasta (all shapes) Ravioli (noodle only) Rice (enriched white or brown) 	1 oz. eq. = ½ cup cooked or 1 oz. (28 g) dry
Group I	Oz. Eq. for Group I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready to eat breakfast cereal (cold, dry)^{5, 6} 	1 oz. eq. = 1 cup or 1 oz. for flakes and rounds 1 oz. eq. = 1.25 cups or 1 oz. for puffed cereal 1 oz. eq. = ¼ cup or 1 oz. for granola

**Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the
School Nutrition Programs Chart^{1, 2}** (Using 16 Grams of Grains per Serving)
Recommended for SY 2012–2013, Required SY 2013–2014

- ¹ The following food quantities from Groups A-G, must contain at least 16 grams of whole-grain or can be made with 8 grams of whole-grain and 8 grams of enriched meal and/or enriched flour to be considered whole grain-rich.
- ² Some of the following grains may contain more sugar, salt, and/or fat than others. This should be a consideration when deciding how often to serve them.
- ³ Allowed only as dessert at lunch as specified in 7 CFR §210.10.
- ⁴ Allowed for desserts at lunch as specified in 7 CFR §210.10 and for breakfasts served under the SBP.
- ⁵ Refer to program regulations for the appropriate serving size for supplements served to children aged 1 through 5 in the NSLP. Breakfast cereals are traditionally served as a breakfast menu item but may be served in meals other than breakfast.
- ⁶ Cereals must be whole-grain or whole grain and enriched or fortified cereal.

This chart is also available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2012/SP30-2012os.pdf>.

The Grains Requirement for School Nutrition Programs Chart will help CEs that continue to credit grain products based on the **14.75 grams of grains per serving**. This chart should be used to determine which products meet the grains requirements and does **not** indicate which products are whole grain-rich. This chart may be used during SY 2012–2013 as CEs transition to the new meal pattern whole grain requirements. For SY 2013–2014, CEs must use the Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart.

Grains Requirement for School Nutrition Programs Chart^{1, 2}
(Using 14.75 Grams of Grains per Serving) — For Use in SY 2012–2013

Group A	Oz. Eq. for Group A
Breading Type Coating	1 serving = 20 grams for 0.7 oz.
Bread Sticks—hard	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 15 grams or 0.5 oz.
Chow Mein Noodles	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 10 grams or 0.4 oz.
Crackers—saltines and snack crackers	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 5 grams or 0.2 oz.
Croutons	
Pretzels—hard	
Stuffing—dry; Not: weight applies to bread in stuffing	

Grains Requirement for School Nutrition Programs Chart ^{1, 2} (Using 14.75 Grams of Grains per Serving) — For Use in SY 2012–2013	
Group B	Oz. Eq. for Group B
Bagels	1 serving = 25 grams or 0.9 oz.
Batter Type Coating	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 19 grams or 0.7 oz.
Biscuits	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 13 grams or 0.5 oz.
Breads—white, wheat, whole wheat, French, Italian	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 6 grams or 0.2 oz.
Buns—hamburger and hot dog	
Crackers—graham (all shapes), animal crackers	
Egg Roll Skins	
English Muffins	
Pita Bread—white, wheat, whole wheat	
Pizza Crust	
Pretzels—soft	
Rolls—white, wheat, whole wheat, potato	
Tortillas—wheat or corn	
Tortilla Chips—wheat or corn	
Taco Shells	
Group C	Oz. Eq. for Group C
Cookies ³ = plain	1 serving = 31 grams or 1.1 oz.
Cornbread	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 23 grams or 0.8 oz.
Corn Muffins	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 16 grams or 0.6 oz.
Croissants	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 8 grams or 0.3 oz.
Pancakes	
Pie Crust—dessert pies ³ , meat/meat alternate pies and fruit turnovers ⁴	
Waffles	
Group D	Oz. Eq. for Group D
Doughnuts ⁴ —cake, yeast raised, unfrosted	1 serving = 50 grams or 1.8 oz.
Granola Bars ⁴ —plain	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 38 grams or 1.3 oz.
Muffins—all except corn	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 16 grams or 0.9 oz.
Sweet Roll ⁴ —unfrosted	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 13 grams or 0.5 oz.
Toaster Pastry ² —unfrosted	
Group E	Oz. Eq. for Group E
Cookies ³ —with nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces and/or fruit purees	1 serving = 63 grams or 2.2 oz.
Doughnuts ⁴ —cake and yeast raised, frosted or glazed	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 47 grams or 1.7 oz.
French Toast	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 31 grams or 1.1 oz.
Grain Fruit Bars ⁴ —with nuts, raisins, chocolate pieces and/or fruit	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 16 grams or 0.6 oz.
Sweet Rolls ⁴ —frosted	
Toaster Pastry ⁴ —frosted	
Group F	Oz. Eq. for Group F
Cake ³ —plain, unfrosted	1 serving = 74 grams or 2.7 oz.
Coffee Cake ⁴	$\frac{3}{4}$ serving = 56 grams or 2 oz.
	$\frac{1}{2}$ serving = 38 grams or 1.3 oz.
	$\frac{1}{4}$ serving = 19 grams or 0.7 oz.

Grains Requirement for School Nutrition Programs Chart ^{1, 2} (Using 14.75 Grams of Grains per Serving)—For Use in SY 2012–2013	
Group G	Oz. Eq. for Group G
Brownies ³ —plain	1 serving = 115 grams or 4 oz.
Cake ³ —all varieties	¾ serving = 86 grams or 3 oz. ½ serving = 58 grams or 2 oz. ¼ serving = 29 grams or 1 oz.
Group H	Oz. Eq. for Group H
Barley	1 serving = ½ cup cooked or 25 grams dry
Breakfast Cereals—cooked ⁵	
Bulgur (cracked wheat)	
Macaroni—all shapes	
Noodles, egg—all varieties	
Pasta—all shapes	
Ravioli—noodle only	
Rice—enriched while or brown	
Group I	Oz. Eq. for Group I
Breakfast Cereal—cold, dry ⁵	1 serving = ¾ cup or 1 oz., whichever is less
¹ The following foods are whole grain or enriched or made with enriched or whole grain meals and/or flour, bran and/or germ. ² Some of the foods below, or their accompaniments, may contain more sugar, salt and/or fat than others. To meet the Dietary Guidelines, serve products low in fat, sugar and salt. ³ Allowed only for desserts under the Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning System. ⁴ Allowed for desserts under the Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning System; allowed for breakfast under Traditional Food Based and Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning Systems. ⁵ Refer to School Breakfast Pattern Chart in this manual for the appropriate serving sizes for children ages 1 through 5. This chart is also available at http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/FBG_Section_3-GrainsBreads.pdf .	

Reminders Regarding Grains

- Do not include *grain* food items offered at breakfast as contributing to the required number of servings of *grains* per week required by the lunch meal patterns.
- When serving multiple choice menus, not every grain choice is required to be whole grain-rich. The whole grain-rich requirement is determined on a weekly basis. Not every grain item must be whole grain-rich if there are enough oz. eq. of grain offered throughout the week that are whole grain-rich.
- When a choice of two different menu items is offered, CEs should credit for the larger-sized *grain* offering for the day.

For Example: *In the following example the day should be counted as offering 2-grains.*

Salad Bar	Hamburger on Bun
8 Square Saltine Crackers = 1 grain	1 Bun = 2 grains

Determining Daily Minimum and Weekly Maximum Grain Offerings

To determine the daily minimum and weekly maximum grain offerings for a planned menu, the menu planner must identify the menu item(s) with the smallest grain contribution for the day and the menu item(s) with the largest grain contribution for the day. Then, do the following:

1. Minimum Offering – Sum the smallest daily contributions for the week (Multiply the smallest daily amount times the number of days in that week)
2. Maximum Offering – Sum the largest daily contributions for the week (Multiply the largest weekly amount times the number of days in that week)

The daily and weekly minimums and maximums must be within the age/grade group guidelines for with the specific menu was planned.

Foods That Do Not Qualify as Grains

Snack-type foods, such as non-enriched chips or potato chips, do not qualify as grains and may not be credited toward meeting the grain requirement in meals served in the NSLP. Refer to the grains chart in this section for creditable items.

Formulated grain-fruit product may be considered a dessert for the lunch meal. However, a school may offer a total of 2 oz. eq. or less of grain-based deserts each week.

***For Example:** A school can offer 2 oz. eq. of a grain-based desert over the course of a week.*

CEs should refer to Whole Grain-Rich Ounce Equivalency Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs Chart.

(NOTE: When any cereal grain is used as an ingredient in a grain product, use the serving size given for the appropriate bread group.)

***For Example:** A serving of oatmeal cereal should weigh 25 grams (Group H).)*

Common Problems: Grains

1. Purchased-prepared (or partially-prepared) grain items are served and credited as contributing to the lunch meal pattern before it has been determined whether the items are whole grain-rich. Examples of purchased-prepared grain items include frozen pancakes and waffles, refrigerated rolls, taco shells, tortillas and tortilla pieces, dry biscuit and muffin mixes and prepared pizza crusts.

Solution: Secure an ingredient statement from the individual product wrapper, bulk packing container or manufacturer demonstrating that the item contains whole-grain and/or enriched flour and/or meal. Each serving must contain at least 14.75 grams for SY 2012–2013 (16 grams in SY 2013–2014) of enriched flour and/or meal or whole-grain and whole grains per serving must be ≥ 8 grams to be credited as one full serving of grains or each serving must meet the minimum serving sizes.

2. A smaller-sized portion of the menu item being credited daily as a grain is served in the lower grades thus reducing the serving size to less than one full serving including rice,

macaroni and spaghetti, taco shells and crackers.

Solution: When reducing the portion size of a grain menu item to less than a full-sized serving for students in the lower grades, be certain that the item is not the sole source of grains in the daily menu. Less than a full-sized serving of grains may be counted toward the weekly grain requirement, but the daily minimum requirement is one full serving of grains.

Milk Component of the Reimbursable Lunch

All milk served must be either 1% low fat unflavored milk and/or nonfat flavored and/or nonfat unflavored milk.

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that persons over two years of age consume fat-free or 1 % low-fat milk. CEs must offer at least two milk choices

- One (1) percent low fact milk must be unflavored milk
- Fat-free milk may be flavored or unflavored milk.

All milk served shall be pasteurized fluid types of milk, all of which must meet state and local standards for milk. The milk shall contain vitamins A and D at levels specified by the FDA and consistent with state and local standards. To meet the nutrition standards, it is recommended that the fluid milk with the lowest fat and sugar content be offered.

Prohibition on Choice of Beverage

USDA has ruled that a school may not offer juice for free to students who refuse milk, while charging other students who selected milk as part of their meal, an a la carte price for juice. Such a practice is prohibited because it violates the unit pricing requirement and effectively undermines the milk component as an integral part of the reimbursable meal by offering a substitute beverage at the unit price.

A similar practice has also been observed in schools that mistakenly offer a choice among milk, tea and fruit-flavored drinks with “beverage” erroneously considered to be a meal component. As discussed above, schools are prohibited from charging extra for an alternate beverage for students who accept milk, while giving away an alternate beverage to those who refuse milk.

In the FND Permanent Agreement schools consent to price lunches as a unit. Thus, schools agree to offer five (5) food items at a locally established unit price for lunch. The lunch meal pattern specifies fluid milk as a component; the only substitutions allowed are for documented medical reasons. (See Section 13, Accommodating Children With Special Dietary Needs.)

Regulations permit any of the following milk offering options:

1. To offer milk as an integral part of the meal pattern and to charge a separate (a la carte) price for juice (or fruit-flavored drink or tea) to all students. Schools are urged to consider the offerings and the pricing structure with the goal of encouraging students to accept and consume a nutritionally balanced, reimbursable meal.

2. To give away juice (or fruit-flavored drink or tea) to all students who request it, regardless of whether they have accepted milk as part of the reimbursable meal. That is, a school may offer another beverage in addition to milk, as long as students are aware that they may take both the milk and the other beverage as part of the unit-priced meal.
3. To incorporate juice as a creditable fruit or vegetable food item within the reimbursable meal (along with milk, grains, meat/meat alternates and a second fruit and/or vegetable source at lunch). As always, the charge for additional servings beyond the unit-priced meal would be subject to the CE's a la carte pricing policy.

The school's policy should be clearly publicized so that students understand their options. If OVS is implemented, the following apply:

- The student would still be permitted to decline any one (or two) food item(s) at lunch and one food item at breakfast and receive a reimbursable meal at the unit price.
- The student's decision to accept or decline the milk component, as such, cannot be used to determine whether the school will charge that student for the juice or other beverage.
- The regulations continue to permit the establishment of different unit prices for different choice menus, provided that all students are offered the same selection regardless of free and reduced-price eligibility.

Schools are encouraged to offer choices of food items in order to increase consumption and participation.

Milk Substitutes

Schools have the option to offer a nondairy milk substitute to a student with a medical or special dietary need other than a disability. If schools choose to offer a milk substitute, they are not required to offer a choice of acceptable milk substitutes. Schools must obtain TDA approval prior to offering a milk substitute.

Milk substitutes offered as part of the reimbursable meal must be included in the weighted nutrient analysis and, therefore, are subject to the overall weekly average fat limit and calorie ranges of the meal pattern.

Water is not an acceptable substitute for fluid milk. Only a nondairy beverage meeting the nutrient standards can be substituted for fluid milk. Refer to Section 13 for information regarding the nutrient standards for milk substitutes.

Schools may offer all students organic milk or milk with a label indicating it was produced from cows not treated with hormones. The requirement is for fluid milk and milk labeled in this manner would meet the requirement. Schools do not have to honor a request to substitute milk with organic milk or milk with a label indicating it was produced from cows not treated with hormone. Offering milk labeled in this manner is at the discretion of the school.

Milk and Offer Versus Serve (OVS)

Under OVS, a meal without fluid milk is reimbursable. If there is no OVS, a reimbursable meal must include milk or an acceptable milk substitute, except for a student with a disability (in which case the school must follow the licensed physician's written statement). If the school does not offer an acceptable milk substitute for students without disabilities, the student has to take the fluid milk for the meal to be reimbursable. For a student with a recognized disability, the meal may consist of only four components and a beverage from home, if so prescribed by a licensed physician. Refer to Section 13 for information regarding disabilities and milk substitutes.

Milk Shakes in the Reimbursable Lunch

If a milk shake is offered as part of the reimbursable lunch, it must contain at a minimum eight fl.oz. of fluid milk.

Smoothies

Even though whole fruit is recommended, smoothies may count toward meeting the required fruit and milk components for both lunch and breakfast. However, it is not recommended that smoothies be served at more than one meal on the same day. Menu planners also need to remember that smoothies count toward weekly calorie and saturated fat totals.

The rules for smoothies prepared by program operators and those prepared by commercial companies are not the same.

Program Operator Prepared. Smoothies made by program operators may count toward the required fruit or milk components. These smoothies may be prepared ahead of time or at the time of service.

- **Fruit Component.** To credit as a fruit serving, the smoothie must contain the minimum amount of fruit— $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.
 - Credited amounts of fruit in a smoothie will count as a juice serving.
 - Only pureed fruit in smoothies may count as juice.
 - Juice offerings can total up to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the weekly servings of fruit.
- **Milk.** To credit toward the milk requirement, the smoothie must be made of 1% unflavored milk or unflavored or flavored fat-free milk.
 - Smoothies do not have to contain the full 8 fl. oz. serving of milk.
 - Even if the smoothie contains 8 fl. oz. of milk, the full fluid milk component must also be offered on the serving line.

Commercially Prepared. Commercially prepared smoothies may be credited toward the fruit requirement if the smoothie contains the minimum serving requirement— $\frac{1}{8}$ cup but cannot be credited for the milk requirement.

- **Fruit Component.** The smoothie label needs to clearly state the ingredients in order for the contents to be credited toward the fruit component.
 - The smoothie must be made of pureed fruit.

- Fruit in smoothies is credited as a juice and may be counted for up to ½ of the weekly fruit component.
- Smoothies with less than 100% juice content are the only example of when less than 100% juice may be offered and credited as a fruit component.

***For Example:** An eight (8) oz. smoothie beverage made from fruit puree with the juice content labeled as “contains 50% juice” would credit as 4.0 fl. oz. or ½ cup of juice.*

All smoothies must adhere the following:

- **Juice in Smoothies.** Juice in smoothies may be fortified with vitamins and minerals.
For Example: Orange juice fortified with calcium and Vitamin D.
- **Other Components.** Ingredients in smoothies cannot be credited toward the daily serving portions for the vegetable, meat/meat alternate (including yogurt) or grain components, but they do count toward weekly minimum and maximum range of these components if the ingredient amount is greater than or equal to 0.25 oz. eq.
- **Other Ingredients.** Dietary and herbal supplements in smoothies are not credible with the exception of juice fortified with vitamins and minerals.

Common Problems: Milk

1. Milk is placed on the tray of children in lower grades, thus not allowing them to make a choice.

Solution: Allow each child to select his/her own milk.

2. Milk is offered as a choice against another beverage.

Solution: There is no substitute for milk; therefore, it can never be offered as a choice against another food or beverage.

3. The school is temporarily unable to obtain a supply of milk.

Solution: If emergency conditions temporarily prevent a school from having milk available, TDA may approve the service of lunches during the emergency period without milk. Contact TDA as soon as possible prior to meal service.

4. The school does not offer a milk substitute and does not do OVS.

Solution: Schools can serve both milk and water but can claim only those meals served with fluid milk for reimbursement.

(NOTE: Schools wishing to offer a milk substitute must notify TDA. For additional information, see Section 13, Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs).

Sulfiting Agents in Foods

Sulfiting agents are used in many processed foods as preservatives. Medical findings have linked sulfiting agents to severe adverse reaction by sensitive individuals. Individuals have been reported to suffer life-threatening respiratory distress, shock, and even coma after eating food treated with sulfiting agents.

To help sulfite-sensitive people avoid problems, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- prohibits the use of sulfites on fresh produce (except fresh potatoes) intended to be sold or served raw and
- requires the presence of sulfites in processed food to be declared on the label.

Processed foods that may contain sulfites include baked goods, condiments, dried and glacéed fruit, jam, gravy, dehydrated or pre-cut or peeled “fresh” potatoes, molasses, shrimp, soup mixes and beverages, such as beer, wine, hard cider, fruit and vegetable juices, and tea.

For schools participating in the NSLP, the USDA

- prohibits the addition of sulfites, such as “vegetable fresheners” and “potato whiteners,” to any foods during meal preparation and
- recommends that CEs do not purchase foods treated with sulfiting agents.

Any questions regarding the use of sulfiting agents should be referred to local or state health authorities.

Advertising Literature, CN Labels, Product Analysis Sheets and Product Formulation Statements

Food purchasing for the NSLP is a difficult and specialized job. Like all buyers, one must be able to recognize value and quality in order to make reliable price comparison. Unlike other buyers, the person purchasing for the NSLP must also purchase products that meet the federal meal pattern requirements for the NSLP. One area of particular concern is the procurement of commercially-prepared meat and poultry products. It is often difficult to determine these products’ contributions toward meal pattern requirements.

The following questions should be resolved regarding such meat products served in school lunches:

- What percent fat is in the meat?
- What percent saturated fat is in the meat?
- Is the meat trans fat free?
- If cooked dry beans are used, what is the volume measure?
(NOTE: Breakfast and lunch requirement for beans is measured by volume, not oz.).
- If commercially-prepared tofu is used, does it contain at least 5 grams of protein per serving?

- If alternate protein product is used to contribute toward the meat/meat alternate requirement, is it used in compliance with regulations?
- Finally, what contribution does the total product make toward meeting the lunch requirement?

The buyer has various purchasing tools to help in this task. CN labels and signed product analysis sheets and/or company certified product formulation statements based on formulation and/or laboratory testing that contain meal pattern contribution statements are two of these methods. Each provides valuable information for the buyer; however, the buyer should be aware of their differences. Additionally, many manufacturers provide buyers with advertising literature that may make statements regarding the contribution of a particular product to the NSLP meal pattern.

Advertising literature is not acceptable for use in supporting reimbursement claims.

The Product Contribution Toward New Meal Pattern Comparison Chart provides detailed information to help menu planners in making decisions.

Product Contribution Toward New Meal Pattern Comparison Chart			
	Child Nutrition Labels	Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis Sheets)	Advertising Literature
Description	Product label that contains a statement which clearly identifies the meal pattern contribution of the product.	Document that contains a statement which clearly identifies the meal pattern contribution of the product (must be signed).	Any printed material that contains varied information about one or more products.
Standard Information is Required	Yes	No	No
Reviewed and Monitored by USDA	Yes	No	No
Carries a USDA Guidance	Yes	No	No
Product Identification Numbers	Each CN labeled product is assigned its own distinct 6-digit identification number.	The product must be identifiable by name, code number, weight, ingredient listing, etc.	No standards.
Accepted during an Administrative Review	Yes	Yes	No

What is Advertising Literature?

Advertising literature is information provided by the company that may contain valuable information about one or more of the company's products, but it may not be used to support the contribution that a product makes toward the NSLP meal pattern. The follow example helps to clarify this issue.

For Example: Advertising Literature for XYZ Food Products

XYZ Food Products, 1200 Nowhere St., Anywhere, USA 00000

New School Lunch Products

- *Fully Cooked Charbroiled Beef Pattie* (Product Code 0000)
Ingredients: Beef, Water, Fortified Textured Soy Protein Concentrate, Seasoning
Cooked Portion Size: 2.68 oz. eq. Case Pack: 40 pcs–6.7 lb case
- *Fully Cooked Charbroiled Pork Pattie* (Product Code 0000)
Ingredients: Pork, Water, Fortified Textured Soy Protein Concentrate, Seasoning
Cooked Portion Size: 2.65 oz. eq. Case Pack: 45 pcs–7.45 lb case

Preparation Instructions: (From frozen state), Conventional Oven: Preheat oven to 375° F. Cook for 50 minutes. Convection Oven: Preheat oven to 350° F. Cook for 35 minutes.

Benefits

- Meet all FNS requirements. Provide 2 oz. eq. of cooked lean meat for school lunch
- Convenient Packaging
- Easy Handling and Preparation
- Reduced Sodium

This advertising literature contains questionable information and also lacks necessary information to determine the product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements.

Questionable Information in the Sample Advertisement

1. *The ingredient statement lists beef, not ground beef. This means that the patties could contain partially defatted chopped beef and/or meat by-products. The fat level is not restricted to a 30% maximum level as with ground beef.*
2. *This fact sheet claims that the products described provide 2 oz. eq. cooked lean meat for school lunch programs. The reader has no way of making this determination.*
3. *This fact sheet contains no certification statement.*
4. *This fact sheet is not signed by a company official.*

Information Needed from the Manufacturer in Order to Determine the Product's Meal Pattern Contribution in the Sample Advertisement

1. *Weight of raw portion*
2. *Percent fat of the raw meat*
3. *Weight of raw meat*

4. Amount of dry alternate protein product in the product if contained.
5. Proper hydration instructions and certification that the alternate protein product used is authorized as an alternate food in the Child Nutrition Programs and meets USDA-FNS requirements.

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program

What is a CN Label?

A CN label is a product label that contains a statement that clearly identifies the contribution that the product makes toward the lunch meal pattern requirements. This label carries a USDA warranty against audit claims if used according to the manufacturer's directions. This warranty applies to the CN labeled product portion, not the entire meal.

The Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program administered by USDA. The CN Labeling Program is administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) section of USDA. AMS reviews Quality Control (QC) Programs for compliance with the CN Labeling Program requirements as a fee-based service. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has overall program administration authority of the CN Labeling Program and establishes related policies, instructions and regulations. Complete information on the CN Labeling Program can be accessed at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/>.

The CN Labeling Program is responsible for reviewing a product formulation to determine the contribution that a single serving of that product makes toward the NSLP meal pattern requirements. The meal pattern requirements specify the foods and the minimum amounts that must be served in institutions participating in the NSLP. The existence of a CN label on a product provides schools and other SNP operators with a guarantee that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements as printed on the label.

Federal Inspection

All CN labeled products must be produced under an appropriate USDA or U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC) federal inspection program to ensure that the label statement accurately reflects the amount of each ingredient used in the product. This will help protect local foodservice directors from misinformation and will ensure that manufacturers with CN labeled products are competing for sales on a common basis. Federal agencies inspecting these products include the following:

- Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of USDA
- Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of USDA
- National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) of the U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC)



Yield data from the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* is used for calculating a CN labeled product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements. Using yields from the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* will help ensure that various meat/meat alternate items, regardless of cooking methods used or the addition of other ingredients, will be nutritionally equivalent. Manufacturers must not use the CN label statement to promote a product's nutritional value or acceptability.

Manufacturers are not authorized, under any circumstances, to place the CN Logo and contribution statement on fact sheets or any other product information. Manufacturers are only authorized to use and distribute the CN Label on actual product manufactured following a Federally-Approved Quality Control Program. Information about requesting copies of federally inspected product labels from manufacturers during the bidding process can be found at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/copying_labels.htm.

Label Statement

The CN label statement must be an integral part of the product label and include the following information:

- The CN logo, which is a distinct border around the CN statement.
- A six-digit product identification number assigned by FNS, which will appear in the upper right hand corner of the CN label statement.
- The statement of the product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements. This identifies the contribution of a specific portion of a meat/meat alternate product toward the meat/meat alternates, grains and/or vegetable and/or fruit component of the meal pattern requirements.
- Statement specifying the use of the logo and CN label statement is authorized by FNS.
- The month and year the label was approved by FNS.

The current CN Labeling Program is limited to the following:

- Entrée items: Main dish products which contribute a minimum of 0.5 oz. eq. of meat/meat alternates towards the meal pattern requirements including, but are not limited to, beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls and breaded fish portions.
- Fifty-percent juice drinks and juice drink products: Juice drink and juice drink products which contain at least 50 percent full-strength juice by volume. This includes such products as grape drink, fruit punch and juice bars.

CN Labels for the New Meal Pattern Requirements

Manufacturers may apply for a CN Label for qualifying product (meat/meat alternate food items containing grains) to indicate the number of oz. eq. grains that meet the whole grain-rich criteria. CN labels will be revised by FNS to document the creditable amounts of the vegetable subgroups—dark green, red/orange, beans/peas (legumes), starchy, and other.

The term “oz. eq. grains” on the CN Label indicates the product meets the whole grain-rich criteria. The terms “bread” or “bread alternate” on the CN Label indicates the product meets previous requirements for grains/breads (requirements prior to SY 2012-2013).

Penalty for Misuse of CN Logo

USDA has developed a logo to protect the integrity of the CN Labeling Program to avoid possible abuse and to make the CN label statement easy to identify. The logo is a distinctive border design that surrounds the label statement. Companies will not be allowed to use the logo or statement without permission.

If a company uses the CN logo inappropriately, USDA will notify it and give it 30 days to discontinue use of the logo. If the company continues to use the label, its name will be put on a list that will be sent quarterly to all Child Nutrition Programs and Technical Services regional offices. Regional offices will then circulate the list to the states. In addition, other actions may be taken.

Advantages of Using CN Labeled Products

All CN labeled products that are federally approved and have a CN logo carry a warranty. If a CE purchases such a product and uses it according to the manufacturer’s directions, the institution will not have an audit claim filed against it for that CN labeled product, for noncompliance with the meal pattern requirements. If a state or federal auditor finds that a CN labeled product does not actually meet meal pattern requirements claimed on the label, the auditor will report this finding to the USDA national office. USDA will prepare a report on the findings and send it to the appropriate division of FSIS, AMS, NMFS, FDA, or the Department of Justice for action against the company. That office will then be responsible for auditing production records to determine whether the product, as produced, met the conditions of the CN label statement before it left the plant.

If the audit shows the product, as produced, does not meet the label statement, any or all of the following actions may be taken:

- The company’s CN label may be revoked for a specific period of time.
- The appropriate agency may pursue a misbranding or mislabeling action against the company producing the product.
- The company’s name will be circulated to USDA regional offices or USDA will require the foodservice program involved to notify the state office of the labeling violation.

The CN label statement tells how the labeled product can be “credited” or “counted” toward meeting the meal pattern requirements. A CN label statement **does not** do the following:

- Assure that a product is “good for children.”
- Assure that a product is “acceptable” to children.
- Suggest that products without CN labels are inferior.
- Cost more.
- Assure that a product contributes to the NSLP meal pattern requirements.

Additional information about the CN Labeling Program can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/default.htm>.

Authorized Manufacturers of CN Labeled Products

AMS has published a list of manufacturers that have met the FNS Quality Control Program requirements for the CN Labeling Program. Additionally, AMS has provided a list of authorized CN labels issued to these manufacturers. These lists are updated monthly and can be accessed at the FNS CN Labeling Program website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/authorized.htm>.

The information in these lists is provided in PDF format and contains the following information:

- CN Identification Number
- Federal or Equal to Federal (ETF) Establishment (EST) Number
- Product description
- Label approval expiration date
- Company name (on a separate directory list)

The following inspection directories with EST number notations can be used to cross reference the EST number with the manufacturer's physical address and in some cases contact information:

- FNS assigned EST numbers end with "FNS", e.g., 12345FNS and ETF establishment numbers end with "ETF" located at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/FNS ETFdirectory.pdf>
- USDC–National Marine Fisheries Service EDT numbers end with "F" only in the PDF the "F" is omitted at the following directory located at http://www.seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov/Participant_List10.pdf
- USDA–Food Safety and Inspection Service EST numbers are numeric or alphanumeric and are the remaining majority located at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/Meat Poultry Egg Inspection Directory/index.asp>

(NOTE: The above directories do not include information about CN Labeled products issued before 2005).

The CN label statement should not be confused with company certified product formulation statements. Product formulation statements are documents provided and signed by a high-ranking company official that tell a product's contribution toward the meal pattern requirements. These may contain pertinent information but are not recognized by auditors or reviewers as official documentation of the product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements. These statements have not been reviewed by USDA and may or may not be accurate. Label statements approved at the state level for state-inspected plants also are **not** reviewed by USDA. State approved labels are **not covered by the CN label warranty**. For the purpose of the Administrative Review, CN labels and signed product analysis sheet/product formulation statements will be accepted as supporting the contribution of a particular product

to the reimbursable breakfast and/or lunch. However, the information provided will be reviewed for questionable statements.

(NOTE: Advertising literature cannot be used to support the contribution of any product.)

The Sample CN Label Chart provides an illustration of an acceptable CN Label for the new meal pattern requirements:

Sample CN Label	
<p style="text-align: center;">Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ingredient Statement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chicken, brown rice, broccoli, red peppers, carrots, onions, water, olive oil, soy sauce, spices</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p style="text-align: center;">CN 099135</p> <p>Each 4.5 oz. Chicken Stir-Fry Bowl provides 1.5 oz. equivalent meat, 1.0 oz. eq. Grains, ¼ cup dark green vegetable, ¼ cup red/orange vegetable, and ⅓ cup other vegetable for Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Requirements. (Use of this logo and statement authorized by the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, XX/XX</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CN</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Net Wt: 18 pounds</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chicken Wok Company 1234 Kluck Street, Poultry, PA 12345</p>	<p>As can be seen in this label, the manufacturer provides the information needed to determine if this product meets the new meal pattern requirements as well as display the information required for USDA Approved Product Labels. It has the following information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CN label statement • Product name • Ingredient listing in descending order of predominance by weight for all ingredients • Establishment number (meat, poultry and seafood items only) • Manufacturer's or distributor's name and address • Inspection legend for the appropriate inspection

What is a Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulation Statement?

A product analysis sheet/product formulation statement contains a statement that clearly identifies the contribution that the product makes toward the meal pattern requirements. This statement is based on formulation and/or laboratory testing and must be signed by company official. A product analysis sheet/product formulation statement carries no USDA warranty or guarantee.

CEs should use the Sample Statement: Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulation Statement for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products Sample (Located at <http://www.squaremeals.org/Publications/Forms.aspx>) for processed M/MA products that are not in the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* and do not have a CN label. The process described on this template helps to provide the required documentation necessary to determine the product's contribution toward meeting meal pattern requirements. This sample is intended to be completed by the manufacturer.

Manufacturers whose products are manufactured in USDA inspected plants are encouraged to pursue the CN labeling process to receive a CN label for the product they are selling to schools. CN label program information can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/CNlabeling/default.htm>.

On occasion product analysis sheet/product formulation statements have contained phrases like “to the best of our knowledge” and/or “contribution of the product is approximately.” A CE should not accept a product analysis sheet/product formulation statement containing such language. Only product analysis sheet/product formulation statements that certify the contribution of the product to the meal pattern requirements should be accepted.

Product analysis sheets/product formulation statements must be kept current. If the formulation of a product changes, a new sheet or statement must be obtained from the manufacturer.

Who Reviews and Monitors Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulations Statements?

Product analysis sheet/product formulation statements are written, designed, and distributed by the individual manufacturer. Although an officer of the company signs these sheets to attest to the printed information, school officials trust that the company officials are making sure that the product label and production records match the description of the product on the product analysis sheet/product formulation statement. The Nutrition and Technical Services Division (NTSD) does not review and monitor product analysis sheet/product formulation statements on a routine basis. There is no requirement that companies send NTSD advertising literature or product analysis sheet or product formulation statements for review. USDA is not a policing agency that handles truth in advertising.

Mislabeled actions are handled by the Federal Trade Commission. NTSD will review fact sheets that use the CN label statement or CN logo inappropriately and refer such matters to the appropriate inspection agency. NTSD will periodically review product analysis sheet/product formulation statements that reference the NSLP as follows:

- When a company sends NTSD a competitor’s product analysis sheet/product formulation statements and asks for a review of the content for accuracy
- When the FNS regional office sends NTSD a product analysis sheet/product formulation statement for review if the following occurs:
 - The CE and/or TDA have made an attempt to solve the problem.
 - The advertisement or product analysis sheet/product formulation statement submitted by the region is current and the material forwarded is complete.
 - Correspondence and/or information regarding the company’s response when previously contacted are included.

USDA **does not** monitor these documents for compliance with the product formulation or the meal pattern requirements.

General Guidance for Reviewing Product Analysis Sheets/Product Formulation Statements

An appropriate product analysis sheet/product formulation statement will provide specific information about the product and show how the credit is obtained by citing resources and/or regulations.³ Specific policies for alternate protein products and menu planning can be accessed at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/APPindustryfaqs.pdf>.

- **Review product analysis sheet/product formulation statements prior to purchasing products.** This document is only for products with a meat/meat alternate contribution and would need to be adapted for the various types of products available on the market.

For Example: Pizza could have credit information about grains and vegetables and/or fruits in addition to the meat/meat alternate component.

- **Determine that creditable ingredients listed in the product formulation statement match a description in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/foodbuyingguide.html>.** If a product formulation statement for a specific product claims to provide a higher credit than what is listed in the FBG, the statement must clarify all crediting ingredients and demonstrate how the product provides that credit.

Verify that the amount of credit that a product may contribute to the meal pattern requirements is not greater than the serving size of the product.

For Example: A 2.2 fl. oz. (¼ cup) frozen fruit pop or bar may not credit for more than 2.2 fl. oz. or ¼ cup of fruit or fruit juice.

- **Assure that the product analysis sheet/product formulation statement proves how the claimed credit was obtained.** It is never acceptable for a manufacturer to simply state that the product provides a certain amount of credit for the meal pattern.

For Example: Fruit filled pancakes may not provide meat alternate because it is not obvious how the product contributes to the meat alternate component. In order for a product to claim a meat or meat alternate contribution, the product must have a visible meat or meat alternate present, such as a sausage link, beans, cheese or peanut butter.

³ For additional information on product information related to meat/meat alternates, see the Steps Before Purchasing Any Meat, Poultry, Fish, or Tofu Product located in this section.

CEs are encouraged to review product literature carefully to ensure that menus meet the meal pattern requirements. The following templates are available at <http://www.squaremeals.org/Publications/Forms.aspx> to assist CEs in getting needed documentation from manufacturers:

- Sample Statement: Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulation Statement for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products Template
- Soy Company X, Soy Protein Concentrate Product Y Template
- Product Analysis Sheet/Product Formulation Statement to Provide for a Grain Product Template

Point-of-Service Identification

For the purpose of identifying a reimbursable meal at the point-of-service, the menu planner will need to provide students and cashiers with details about the various combinations of menu items (including the various entrees) that may constitute a reimbursable meal.

If the school has a salad bar, the students may be able to make an “entree salad” or a “side salad” (a side dish menu item) from the various ingredients.

***For Example:** Students and cashiers need to be informed that the entree salad consists of two scoops of tuna or chicken salad plus a bowl of lettuce and other items. The side salad/menu item could be a bowl of lettuce and other vegetables or a bowl of fruit salad.*

The Reimbursable Lunch under Offer versus Serve (OVS)

OVS is a serving method designed to reduce food waste and food costs in the NSLP without jeopardizing the nutritional integrity of the lunches served. It allows senior high school students (age/grade group 9–12) and, when offered by the CE, students in any other grades to choose fewer than all of the food items within the lunch pattern.

OVS is a requirement in the NSLP for senior high schools and is an option for lower grade schools. Under OVS, schools must offer all required food components and quantities.

Students are required to select at least 3 full components—one of which must be a creditable serving of fruit or vegetable—in the NSLP. If the three (3) components taken do not include a fruit or a vegetable, then, the student must take at least one of the following for the meal to be reimbursable:

- ½ cup fruit
- ½ cup vegetable
- ¼ cup fruit and ¼ cup vegetable (equals ½ cup in total)

CEs must plan meals in the NSLP to meet all meal requirements and provide the required amount of food for all students. SNP directors and menu planners should consider participation and selection trends to determine what and how much food to offer students. CEs must ensure

that students have access to all the required food components for the reimbursable meal and to minimize food waste.

Schools that use this method of serving must continue to offer all five required food components of the lunch menu (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains and meat/meat alternates). A student may refuse one or two of the five food components—food items he/she does not intend to eat.

Exception: The students **must** select at least ½ cup of either fruit and/or vegetable as part their reimbursable meal. When a full portion of a food component is declined, a smaller portion may be offered. However, a smaller portion cannot be counted as a food component, except when modifications are made for meat/meat alternates.

At least three full portions of the five food components offered must be taken for a lunch to be reimbursable. The number of components that may be declined at lunch under OVS is the same for all age/grade groups. The School Pattern—How to Recognize a Reimbursable Meal Chart—Lunch provides a snapshot of the choices students have in selecting the 3 components.

How to Recognize a Reimbursable Meal Chart—Lunch						
Sample Student Choices	Components					Is the Meal Reimbursable?
	Meat/Meat Alternate	Grains	Milk	Fruit*	Vegetable*	
	Student must choose at least <u>1</u> of these components			Student must choose at least <u>1</u> of these components		Student must choose a total of <u>3</u> components.
Choice 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES
Choice 2		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	YES
Choice 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES
Choice 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES
Choice 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	NO
Choice 6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____	NO
* Student must be offered the full portion, but may choose to take a minimum of a ½ cup for a reimbursable meal.						

Senior High School

Schools are required to implement the OVS provision for senior high school students (grades 9-12). In senior high school, a student must be allowed to refuse those food items which he/she does not intend to eat. However, under OVS a lunch is reimbursable only if a student takes a minimum of a ½ cup of fruit and/or vegetable component(s) in addition full portions of at least two other components.

In menu planning, CEs need to remember that fruit and the vegetables are two different components in the new meal pattern.

Fruit or Vegetable Components. A student may choose to take a smaller portion of the fruit or vegetable or a combination of the two components as long as

1. the total amount taken is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup and
2. each serving portion is a creditable amount— $\frac{1}{8}$ cup.

Offering more than one type of fruit and vegetable components in different serving sizes will help students make selections and ensure that the school meets the meal pattern requirement.

For Example: *In determining if the meal is reimbursable, the following examples may provide additional guidance:*

- *Combinations: A CE might offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of a dish consisting of different fruits (e.g., fruit salad), different vegetables (e.g., mixed vegetables) or a combination of only fruits and vegetables (e.g., carrot/raisin salad)*
- *A student may select $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable to meet the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup requirement under OVS. The student, however, must select $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fruit **and** $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable to be in compliance with the fruit and vegetable requirement. The student would not be required to select additional fruits or vegetables if the reimbursable meal under OVS includes two other components in full portion.*
- *If a student selects only three components, and two of the three components are fruits and vegetables, the student may select $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of either fruit or vegetable, but then must select the full component of the third.*

The Options for Meeting the Requirement for a Half ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup of Fruit and/or Vegetable Component(s) Chart illustrates five options for meeting this requirement.

Elementary, Middle and Junior High Schools

The implementation of the OVS provision in schools below the senior high school level is left to the discretion of the CE. The school has the option of determining how OVS will operate. In elementary, middle and junior high schools, the CE has the following options:

1. To implement or not implement OVS.
2. To allow students to decline up to two food components (as in senior high schools) or to decline only one food component in which schools or grades OVS will be implemented.

Options for Meeting the Requirement for a Half ($\frac{1}{2}$) Cup of Fruit and/or Vegetable Component(s) Chart		
Option 1	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit	
Option 2	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable	
Option 3	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup one fruit	+ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup another fruit
Option 4	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup one fruit	+ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup one vegetable
Option 5	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup one vegetable	+ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup another vegetable

Identifying Food Items

The meal requirements are specified in the school lunch pattern according to kinds and amounts of food for each of the five food components. Menu items are the actual foods served, such as tacos, fruit salad and green beans. A menu item may consist of only one component or may include contributions from two more components.

Identifying a Reimbursable Lunch

The following example demonstrates a reimbursable meal. (Refer to the Meal Pattern Chart in this section for the requirements for each age/grade group.)

For Example: *If a student in grades 9-12 selects just milk, fruit and vegetables, the student may take ½ cup of the vegetable but must take the full 1 cup offering of the fruit. However, if the student selects another full component, such as a grain or meat/meat alternates, the student may take a smaller portion of the fruit because the fruit is no longer being counted as the 3rd component in the reimbursable meal.*

The ½ cup allowance for fruit or vegetables may be used only once for either the fruit or the vegetable component in a meal, so the other food components selected by the student under OVS must be full components.

Counting Food Components

Meat/Meat Alternates. The meat/meat alternate may be served in one menu item (e.g., sliced turkey, two oz. eq.) or in the main dish and one other menu item (e. g., beef vegetable soup - ½ oz. eq. beef and grilled cheese sandwich - 1½ oz. eq. cheese). If the meat/meat alternate is split between menu items, both items must be taken in order for the meat/meat alternate to count as one of the five food components.

If a student selects only one of the menu items containing meat/meat alternate, the lunch may still be reimbursable if it contains at least three full portions of any other food components.

For Example: *A student could take the sandwich, a piece of fruit and milk and have a reimbursable lunch because it contains three full food components—bread in the sandwich, fruit and milk.*

Fruit and Vegetable. Students must select at least ½ cup of either the fruit or vegetable component under OVS, but full component must be offered.

Grains. To count the grain as one food component, a full portion of grain must be taken. The grain food component may be planned so that it comes from more than one food item

For Example:

- Half (½) slice bread + ¼ c. spaghetti = 1 grain
- One (1) taco shell + ¼ c. rice = 1 grain
- Four (4) saltine crackers + ¼ c. macaroni = 1 grain

A grain item may be counted only once in each reimbursable meal.

For Example: *If a student selected ½ c. spaghetti and eight crackers, it could only be counted as one food component.*

Milk. There is no substitute for fluid milk. In order to count milk as one food component, a ½ pint of fluid milk must be taken. Schools that do not offer an approved fluid milk substitute can offer both fluid milk and water; however, only those meals served with fluid milk may be claimed for reimbursement.

Pre-Plate Delivery System

Schools with a pre-plate delivery system should inform the students that they may request the server to remove from their plate any item or items they do not want. The server should either plate the items the student wants or remove from the plate any item that the student does not want. An announcement by the homeroom teachers, posters in the cafeteria or other suitable announcements should be used, so that all students will understand and know that they have the privilege of refusing any pre-plated item.

Pre-Package Delivery System

To allow students in schools with a prepackage delivery system some choice, these schools are allowed to implement OVS to the extent that is possible as long as students take at least three full components.

Multiple Choice Menus

Some schools have multiple choice menus. The daily minimum requirement applies to fruits, vegetables, grains, meat/meat alternates and milk (all five components) at lunch. All offerings must meet the minimum requirements.

For Example: *In grades 9-12 the minimum daily grain requirement is 2 oz. eq. If a student is offered a choice between a pizza with 2 oz. eq. of grain **OR** a stir fry with a 1 oz. eq. of grains, only one of those offerings meets the 2 oz. minimum. The student would need to have another 1 oz. eq. offered with the stir fry, such as a side item, in order to meet the daily grains minimum.*

The weekly range requirement applies to both the grain and meat/meat alternate components. For menu planning purposes, CEs must offer a weekly menu so that the sum of all daily minimum offering meets at least the weekly minimum requirement. For grades K-5 and 6-8, the daily grains minimum is only 1 oz. eq. and the weekly grains minimum is 8 oz. eq. Offering a minimum of only 1 oz. eq. daily would only total 5 oz. eq. across the week. Therefore, on some

days, schools would have to offer **more** than 1 oz. eq. of grains as a **minimum** offering. The same applies to the weekly minimum amount of meat/meat alternates.

For Example: *If a grade K-5 school offers a 1 oz. eq. grain item (salad) and a 3 oz. eq. grain item (pizza) every day (and instructs the student to select one option only), the minimum weekly offering is 5 oz. eq. grain (1 oz. eq. X 5 days). This menu would not meet the requirement weekly minimum of 8 oz. eq.*

CEs must also plan their menus so that the sum of the daily maximum offerings for grains and meat/meat alternates is equal to or less than the weekly maximum limit. Therefore, the sum of daily minimums must meet the weekly minimum requirement AND the sum of the daily maximums must not exceed the weekly maximum requirement.

For Example: *If every day a grade 9-12 school offered an item with 3 oz. eq. grain (even if other items with lower weights were also options), this would add to a total of a possible 15 oz. eq. offered over the week (a student could select the 3 oz. eq. grain item every day). This menu would not exceed the required weekly maximum of 12 oz. eq.*

Multiple Serving Stations

Each independent line in the cafeteria must meet the daily and weekly requirements (including vegetable subgroups), in order to ensure that a child is able to take a reimbursable meal every day in any line they may choose. If the school has serving stations where a student is able to go to different places to select different components of the meal (i.e., first, salad bar; then, a pasta station; etc.) before passing the point-of-service, all of the stations as a whole must meet the daily required number of components and the required serving portion for each as well as the weekly vegetable subgroup requirements.

Additional Considerations

1. **Choice of Food Items.** The three (or four) food items required to make up a reimbursable lunch must be different food items.
For Example: *A second portion of chicken, French fries, peaches, hot rolls or milk could not count toward the reimbursable lunch.*
2. **Food Offered.** In using OVS, all food items specified in the school lunch pattern must be offered to all students. The quantities of each food item offered must be consistent with the minimum quantities specified for that age/grade group. The quantity of vegetables and fruits offered must be consistent with the planned serving size for each item.
3. **Unit Price.** The lunch must be priced as a unit regardless of whether three, four or all five food items are selected. This means that those students eligible for free lunch will continue to pay nothing; students eligible for reduced-price lunch will still pay the current reduced-price charge; and all other students will pay the full lunch price.
4. **A La Carte.** Schools providing a la carte service: As long as all five food components are made available to each student, any combination of food containing the minimum three (or four) required food components of the planned school lunch may be sold at the school lunch unit price and claimed for reimbursement.

5. **A La Carte.** If students choose less than three (or four) food components that are planned and merchandised as a part of the school lunch, they must pay the a la carte price of those items. A la carte prices should be set to cover the total cost of each menu item.
6. **Seconds/Additional Servings.** If a student asks to take seconds or more than 5 servings, the additional servings must count toward the weekly totals for reimbursable meals. Or the student may pay for the additional servings a la carte in which case the additional servings do not count toward the weekly totals for reimbursable meals.
7. **Refusing an Item.** Schools are not required to offer another item should a student refuse one of the food items in the meal. If a school wishes, it may elect to offer choices.

For Example: A choice between two meat/meat alternate food items or a selection of two food items from three fruit and vegetable items.

There is, however, no alternate to the fluid milk component. Some schools offer one or more beverages, such as juice or juice drink in addition to milk. These choices are not interchangeable since they are in different food groups. A student must be permitted to take milk even if he has also chosen juice. Any menus posted or published by a school must accurately reflect this.

Salad/Theme Bars in Menu Planning

Salad bars that offer multiple vegetable subgroups every day is a great way to meet the weekly vegetable subgroup requirement. The salad bar must be available to all children each day and offers all of the required weekly subgroups over the course of the week.

When planning a salad bar as a part of a reimbursable meal in menu planning, the minimum portion sizes must be consistent with the meal pattern for the age/grade group.

For Example: When choosing fruits and vegetables from the salad bar to meet the required amount for the fruit component and the vegetable component, a menu planner might determine that $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruit component and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegetable component from the salad bar is the minimum for grades K-5 and 6-8, and 1 cup of the fruit component and 1 cup of the vegetable component is the minimum for grades 9-12.

Salad bars can also be used to serve one component or multiple components. Multiple components require a combination of fruits and vegetables with a meat/meat alternate, such as a chef's salad or a fruit plate with cottage cheese. These food items must be served in the minimum amounts as required by the meal pattern. Remember that any fruit or vegetable item meeting the $\frac{1}{8}$ cup minimum requirement, including those on the salad bar, can count towards the fruit or vegetable component.

Pre-portioning food items is one way that can assist foodservice staff in quickly identifying portion sizes. If not pre-portioning, then the cashier must be trained to judge accurately the quantities of self-serve items on student trays, to determine if the food/menu item can count toward a reimbursable meal.

If the fruit and vegetables are located beyond the point-of-service, TDA may authorize an alternate to the point-of-service meal count. Contact TDA to inquire if your salad bar meets requirements with the point-of-service meal count. If the fruits and vegetables are located in an approved location beyond the point-of-service, there must be a system in place to ensure that each reimbursable meal selected by the student includes a fruit or a vegetable and that the total of any fruit or vegetable item selected under OVS equals at least ½ cup.

Schools using salad bars are required to use specific serving size utensils to meet quantity requirements to encourage students to take appropriate food amounts. Regardless of the serving utensils used, however, SNP staff must ensure that the portions on the student's tray meet the meal pattern requirements. This may be done by training the cashiers to visually identify the correct portions or by pre-portioning the food items.

Vegetable subgroups offered on a salad bar need to be itemized on the production records. These food items must also be listed on the menu.

Salad Bars Questions and Answers (January 2011 Edition)

1. *Question:* What resources are available to assist menu planners in implementing self-service salad bars in elementary schools?

Answer: USDA encourages the use of fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals. Self-service salad bars are one approach that can be successfully included in the meal service when monitored closely to ensure safety. It is critical to review food safety resources and provide training for food service staff and students. Resources that might be particularly useful include:

- *Best Practices: Handling Fresh Produce in Schools*, a USDA and National Food Service Management Institute fact sheet that provides specific food safety recommendations for produce. Available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/safety/pdf/best_practices.pdf.
- *Program Information Manual, Retail Food Protection: Recommendations for the Temperature Control of Cut Leafy Greens during Storage and Display in Retail Food Establishments*. Available at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/ucm218750.htm>.
- *Program Information Manual: Retail Food Protection Storage and Handling of Tomatoes*. Available at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/IndustryandRegulatoryAssistanceandTrainingResources/ucm113843.htm>.

- *Retail Food Safety Program Information Manual: Safe Handling Practices for Melons.* Available at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/ucm217290.htm>.
- *Fruits and Vegetables Galore: Helping Kids Eat More*, a USDA publication that contains information on how to train students on salad bar etiquette. Available at: http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/fv_galore.html.

2. *Question:* Are self-service salad bars still allowed in elementary schools?

Answer: Yes, self-service salad bars may be used in elementary schools. It is critical to ensure that all schools with salad bars follow their food safety program to ensure safe foods for students. Factors such as layout and space available in the serving area, equipment available to protect the food on the salad bar from contamination, staffing available to monitor the salad bar during meal service, and training for staff and students must be considered in determining how to safely incorporate a salad bar into a school nutrition program.

The use of food guards or shields is one way to protect food on a salad bar from contamination. NSF International Standard/American National Standard (NSF/ANSI) 2 for Food Equipment provides a standard that establishes the minimum food protection and sanitation requirements for the materials, design, fabrication, construction and performance of food shields for use in elementary schools.

Because food codes and regulations vary among local jurisdictions and states, it is important to check with your local or state health department to determine if there are specific guidelines that must be followed in your jurisdiction for the installation and use of salad bars.

3. *Question:* Are the NSF/ANSI Standards required?

Answer: Meeting the NSF/ANSI standards is not a federal requirement. It is important to check with your local health inspector to determine what serving methods are acceptable in order to be in compliance with local or state requirements.

4. *Question:* Must salad bars be monitored for food safety?

Answer: Self-service of ready-to-eat foods such as occurs with salad bars can pose a food safety risk that can be reduced by supplying clean utensils and dispensers and by employee monitoring of the salad bar during the meal service to ensure that the utensils and dispensers are properly used. Trained food service staff members should monitor the salad bar, keep all surface areas clean, (i.e., quickly clean up spills), and ensure that students follow good food safety practices (i.e., using tongs and staying above the sneeze guard). Keeping the salad bar clean and safe is essential for students' safety. It is important to check with your local or state health department to determine the specific guidelines that must be followed in your jurisdiction when monitoring a salad bar.

5. *Question:* What if we can't afford additional labor costs to have food service staff monitor the salad bar?

Answer: Keeping a salad bar safe and appealing requires monitoring. If a school is not able to provide food service staff or well-trained volunteers to monitor the salad bar during the meal service, pre-wrapped salad bar components may be an option to improve food safety.

6. *Question:* What steps can be taken to help students follow good food safety practices when using a salad bar?

Answer: It is important to teach students about salad bar etiquette. This includes teaching children proper hand washing techniques and how to control transmission of harmful organisms by using tongs and staying above the sneeze guard. In addition to hand washing, students should be supervised to make sure they use good food handling practices while serving themselves at a salad bar. Reminder signs could be posted on the salad bar to reinforce good food handling practices.

7. *Question:* Will pre-wrapped salad bar components increase waste?

Answer: Not necessarily. If schools serve pre-wrapped salad bar components that students like and are packaged in appropriate portions, food waste will be minimized. To reduce packaging waste, reusable or recyclable containers may be used.

8. *Question:* Will pre-wrapped (Grab 'n Go) options ignore the importance of student choice?

Answer: No. Pre-wrapped (Grab 'n Go) options can be offered in a variety of ways (both portion sizes and product combinations) to provide students choices, i.e. selecting from a variety of pre-wrapped salad bar items.

9. *Question:* Will salad bar items be reimbursed?

Answer: Yes, if the salad bar food items are served in the minimum amounts required by the meal pattern, meals containing foods from the salad bar will be reimbursable.

Food Production Records

The CE must keep food production and menu records for the meals they produce. These records must show how the meals offered contribute to the required food components and food quantities for each age/grade group every day.

A complete and accurate food production record must be maintained on all meals claimed for reimbursement. Food production records are the CE's only record that demonstrate that the meals served and claimed met meal pattern requirements and thus were reimbursable. Keep in mind that this requirement includes breakfasts as well as all lunches, including salad and other food bars, quick lines, sack lunches, etc. Any meal claimed for reimbursement must be supported by a food production record.

During an administrative review, two methods are used to evaluate the CE's menus with regard to meeting minimum requirements of the NSLP meal pattern:

- Meals served on the day of the review are observed.
- Menus and production records for previously served meals are examined.

Overclaims must be assessed for meals served on the day of the review that do not meet the minimum meal pattern requirements. Additional overclaims may be assessed if a school's production records for previously served menus indicate meals were missing components or offered insufficient serving sizes. In CEs with more than one production site, it is wise to consider recording the menus and portion sizes on the production record before it is reproduced and distributed to the various kitchens. This is a safeguard against reimbursement being reclaimed due to a busy kitchen manager inadvertently omitting a component from the production record. This is also an excellent method for communicating this information to foodservice personnel.

CEs have the option to use TDA production records or their own production record. Food production records developed by TDA can be found at <http://www.squaremeals.org>. If the CE uses their own production record, they must include all elements included on the TDA production records. CEs have the option to maintain their production records in either paper copy or electronically. However, the CE must be able to provide the production records to TDA upon request.

Nutrient Standards Target/Range

Menus must meet the nutrient standards for calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat for each age/grade group for a five-day week as shown in the Nutrient Standard Chart.

Nutrient Standard Chart			
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Min-Max Calories (kcal) ^{h, i}	550-650	600-700	750-850
Saturated Fat (% of total calories) ⁱ	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (mg) ^{i, j}	≤ 640	≤ 710	≤ 740
Trans fat ⁱ	Nutrition label or manufacturer specification must indicate zero grams of <u>trans fat</u> per serving. ^k		

^h The average daily amount of calories for a 5-day school week must be within the range (at least the minimum and no more than the maximum values).

ⁱ Discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) may be added to the meal pattern if within the specifications for calories, saturated fat, trans fat and sodium. Foods of minimum nutritional value and fluid milk with fat content greater than 1 percent milk fat are not allowed.

^j Final sodium specifications are to be reached by July 1, 2022 (SY 2022-2023). Intermediate sodium specifications are established for SY 2014-2015 and SY 2017-2018. See Sodium Limits and Timeline—Breakfast table for additional information.

^k Less than 0.5 grams per serving.

The nutrient analysis must meet the targets, or it may result in fiscal action.

Calories

School lunches offered to each age/grade group must average over the school week to a range between the minimum and maximum calorie levels specified in the Nutrient Standard Chart.

Saturated Fat

School lunches offered to all age/grade groups must average over the school week to provide less than 10 percent of total calories from saturated fat.

Sodium

School lunches offered to each age/grade group must average over the school week to reflect the levels of sodium specified in the Nutrient Standard Chart as of School Year 2022-2023. Sodium targets will be phased in over several school years.

The following timeline shows the implementation of the sodium targets over various school years:

Sodium Limits and Timeline—Lunch			
Age/grade groups	Target I: SY 2014-2015	Target II: SY 2017-2018	Final Target: 2022-2023
K-5	≤ 1230 mg	≤ 935 mg	≤ 640 mg
6-8	≤ 1360 mg	≤ 1035 mg	≤ 710 mg
9-12	≤ 1420 mg	≤ 1080 mg	≤ 740 mg

Trans Fat

Nutrition label or manufacturer specification must indicate that each menu item contains zero grams of trans fat per serving. Nutrition labels indicating less than 0.5 grams per serving are acceptable. Naturally occurring trans fat found in products such as beef, lamb and dairy products made with whole milk is excluded from the trans fat requirement.

For commercially-prepared products, schools must refer to the nutrition facts label or a manufacturer's specifications to determine that there are zero grams of trans fat per serving. For mixed dishes that may contain both naturally occurring trans fat (e.g., beef) and added or synthetic trans fats (partially hydrogenated oil), the school must determine if the product is in compliance by requesting information from suppliers on how much of the trans fat is naturally occurring versus if any of the ingredients contain added (synthetic) trans fat.

CEs must rely on nutrition facts labels and manufacturer specifications for the amount of trans fat in a food. Nutrition facts labels and/or manufacturing specifications must be available during an administrative review to verify food items served are trans fat free. Software may be used for the analysis of trans fat for information purposes only; however current nutrition databases do not have complete data for trans fat. Therefore, trans fat is not required in the nutrient analysis for the one-week of menus when using an approved software program. As more trans fat information becomes available, it will be included in the Child Nutrition Database, required by all USDA-approved software.

Nutrition Goals

Menu planning is designed to meet specified nutrient levels for the various age/groups. The food-based menu planning system sets minimum, and in some cases maximum, requirements for each of the five component groups. Calorie ranges and limits on saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium are established for each of the three age/grade groups. The menu planner establishes what the entrees are and the serving sizes of the menu items.

Nutrient Analysis of Meals

CEs are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis. The nutrient analysis may be conducted by the CE or by TDA during the administrative review. The nutrient analysis is conducted for what is offered on each serving line.

CEs may choose to conduct a nutrient analysis to ensure that they are meeting the nutrient standards. CEs choosing to conduct a nutrient analysis must use USDA-approved nutrient analysis software to assess compliance with the nutrient standards. A list of USDA-approved nutrient analysis software is available at <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/menu-planning/software-approved-usda-administrative-reviews/list-approved-software-nsmptmi>.⁴ Those CEs choosing not to conduct a nutrient analysis may request technical assistance from their Education Service Center (ESC) or TDA to help plan meals that are consistent with the new nutrient standards.

CEs may purchase USDA-approved nutrient analysis software with funds from the SNP account. This is considered an allowable cost.

*(NOTE: “Planned meals” represent the CE’s calculation of the items that will need to be prepared for a school’s usual average daily participation (ADP). Ideally, the planned and the offered meals are similar, except for substitutions due to product shortage, delivery failure, etc. Because the meals **offered** are an indicator of previous student selections, TDA will review (or conduct) the nutrient analysis based on what is **offered** to correctly assess the calorie, saturated fat and sodium levels in the meals.)*

The nutrient analysis must include calories, saturated fat (both in grams and percent of calories) and sodium. These are the nutrients that are monitored by TDA. These nutrients will be compared to the required dietary specifications for calories (minimum and maximum levels), sodium and saturated fat. Trans fat does not need to be included in the nutrient analysis. If it is included, the trans fat value will not be used to determine if the menus meet the dietary specifications for trans fat. TDA will examine nutrition labels and manufacturer specifications to monitor trans fat in the food products and food ingredients used to prepare school meals.

⁴ The software developers of the currently approved nutrient analysis software will have one year (July 1, 2013) to make the required changes to their software to be in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements. Software developers of the currently approved programs must show USDA that they have made all the required changes before being moved to the list of Nutrient Analysis Software Approved by USDA for Administrative Reviews. New software developers must be evaluated by USDA and approved before being added to this list.

The Child Nutrition (CN) Database currently includes calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat. Meal pattern information is not and will not be included in the CN Database.

Weighted Averages

Planned menus must be analyzed and compared to the appropriate nutrient standard using weighted averages based on the **projected servings** of each menu item and condiment.

CEs must use weighted averages. Simple averaging is not allowed. A weighted nutrient analysis gives more weight to nutrients in popular foods that are more frequently selected by students. Weighted analyses allow for a greater contribution of nutrients to come from menu items that are selected more often and less nutrient contribution from those menu items selected less often.

CEs that conduct nutrient analyses of centralized menus, will need to consolidate or aggregate production records for all menu items served in reimbursable meals in all of their schools in order to weigh the analysis.

In weighted averaging, the total number of planned reimbursable meals with projected number of servings for each menu item, excluding food items sold as adult meals and a la carte, is required for each menu.

Determining Projected Servings for Weighted Averages

1. The nutrient analysis software system will calculate nutrients and provide a production record based on projected servings.
2. Estimate the number of projected servings based on past production records and meal counts. The Sample Estimate of Number of Servings Needed Chart illustrates one method for determining the number of servings needed.

Sample Estimate of Number Servings Needed Chart (Based on Previous Serving Records)		
Student Choice	Menu	Previous Servings Quantity
Select One	Chicken Nuggets	600
	Fish Fillet	100
	Spaghetti/Meat Sauce	200
Select One	French fries	875
	Tossed Salad	325
	Carrots	350
	Broccoli	250
Select One	Applesauce	350
	Pears	250
	Orange Juice	150
Select One	Dinner Roll	400
	Hamburger Bun	100
	Garlic Bread	300
Select One	Nonfat Unflavored Milk	150
	1% Unflavored Milk	700
	Nonfat Chocolate Milk	50

The CE should conduct weighted averaging at the CE level if central menus are used. A system to aggregate the data on the amounts that will be prepared for reimbursable student meals from the individual schools is needed. If meal planning is done at the individual school level, weighting would be based on the amounts prepared for reimbursable student meals at that school.

Processed Foods

When processed foods are used in menu planning, the nutrient analysis of these products must either be in the National Nutrient Database for Child Nutrition Programs or entered into the CE's local database. The nutrient analysis of the actual product must be used.

A Nutrient Analysis or a "Nutrient Fact Label" must be requested from the manufacturer or broker of any processed foods used, including USDA Foods sent for processing. Request the nutrient analysis as part of your bid specifications. This nutrition information must then be added to the nutrient analysis software. (Contact the software supplier or software manual for directions on how to add this product information to program software.)

Salad/Theme Bars

Menu planners should make a recipe for their salad/theme bar menu. Schools that have more than one typical salad/theme bar need to make a recipe for each one that is represented. The theme bar recipes are treated as another menu choice and averaged into the weekly nutrient analysis based on projected servings. If a student is able to select a reimbursable meal from the salad/theme bar, then, the menu planner must assure that the salad/theme bar menu meets all the components and nutrient requirements of the meal pattern.

The weekly recipe and nutrient analysis of the salad bar or theme bar is based on historical usage of the salad/theme bar items. Standardized recipes should be developed for the salad/theme bars. The recipe should be constructed based on a typical day.

The menu planner would first determine the serving size. Second, the number of servings the recipe produces must be established. Finally, the menu planner must determine the amount of each food ingredient in the recipe by taking the following steps:

1. Measure the amount of each ingredient placed on the salad/theme bar on a typical day
2. Measure the amount of each ingredient left over on the salad/theme bar at the end of the meal service
3. Subtract the amount left over from the amount placed on the salad/theme bar for each ingredient to determine the amount of each ingredient to enter for the recipe

Field Trips and In School Suspension (ISS)

Menus for field trip lunches and lunches served to students in ISS must be incorporated into the menu requirements of the day they are served along with the regularly scheduled menu items. The field trip meals will be viewed as part of the overall week's menu requirements just as if they were meals served on a school campus.

Choices

While multiple choices may be offered for various menu items, the number of choices does not affect the portion sizes and food components that the menu planner establishes as comprising a reimbursable lunch.

The menu planner must assure that daily lunch menus meet the requirement of having the correct number of menu items. The weekly menu must meet the requirements of the food-based menu planning system for each age/grade group served.

Substitutions

Occasionally it is necessary to make a substitution to a planned menu cycle for various reasons such as effective use of leftovers, food shortage or improper delivery from vendors. The use of substitutions may

- change the nutrient content of the meal and, therefore,
- meals may no longer meet the meal pattern requirements or nutrient standards.

When food substitutions are made because of an emergency situation (i.e., food shortage), it is important that the meal pattern component requirements are maintained. Menu substitutions should be made with a “similar” menu item.

For the purposes of meeting the meal pattern requirements, a similar food will mean that at the site level, the substitution is from the same food component group and provides the same component contribution that meets the subgroup requirement and/or provides an equivalent meal contribution.

For Example: Menu Substitution Examples

Example 1: The September 14th menu calls for orange wedges. The supplier informs the CE that they have no oranges to ship to the CE. The menu planner decides to substitute apple wedges for that day’s menu.

Is this an appropriate substitution? — Yes, since both apples and oranges can be menued to meet the fruit component requirement.

Example 2: On September 18, there are 20 servings of rice left over. The cook freezes the leftovers. On September 24, the campus runs out of rolls to serve with the baked chicken. The cook reheats the leftover rice and serves it with the chicken.

Is this an appropriate substitution? — Yes, rolls and rice both meet the grains component requirement, so this is an appropriate substitute. The CE must evaluate the amount of grain contribution each item provides to be sure the grain minimum requirement is met without exceeding the grain maximum.

Example 3: The September 29 menu calls for baby carrots. Because of distribution shortages, the CE did not receive enough product for 10% of its campuses. The food manager substitutes canned green beans for the baby carrots because the CE has a large stock of green beans.

Is this an appropriate substitution? — No, the baby carrots were menued to meet the red/orange vegetable requirements. Another red/orange vegetable should be used for the substitution.

Example 4: On September 30th, the cook burns 100 servings of chicken nuggets. This chicken nugget supplied 1 oz. meat/meal alternate and 1 grain serving. The cook makes hamburger patties that supply 2 oz. meat/meat alternate for the substitutions.

Is this an appropriate substitution? — No, the hamburger pattie does not have a grain component contribution and supplies an additional 1 oz. eq. meat/meat alternate equivalent. Making this substitution may cause the CE to (1) not meet its weekly minimums for grains and (2) not to exceed the weekly maximums for the meat/meat alternates.

Standardized Recipes and Preparation Techniques

All schools must develop and follow standardized recipes. Standardized recipes and preparation techniques **must** be used when planning and serving reimbursable meals. In order to qualify as a standardized recipe, a recipe must have an established and specified yield, portion size and quantity. In addition, the ingredients must be constant in measure and preparation. Standardized recipes developed by USDA are in the Child Nutrition Database. Examples of standardized recipes are included in the USDA *Recipes for Schools* and the *New School Lunch and Breakfast Recipes...A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals*. The ESC Child Nutrition staff has copies of these resources. Schools may also use local or state standardized recipes. If a school uses their own recipes, they must add their recipes to their local database.

Water Availability during Meal Service

CEs participating in the NSLP (and the Seamless Summer Option [SSO]) are required to make potable water available to students at no charge in the place where lunch meals are served during the meal service. There are a variety of ways that schools can implement this requirement.

For Example: *The school can provide water through the following methods.*

- *Offer water pitchers and cups on lunch tables*
- *Allow students to use a nearby water fountain*
- *Allow students to fill personal water bottles or cups with drinking water*
- *Provide prefilled glasses of water offered on each line*

Whatever solution is chosen, the water must be available to all students where meals are served.

While potable water is required to be made available to students, it is **not** considered part of the reimbursable meal. Students are **not** required to take water. Although there is no separate funding available for this provision and reimbursement cannot be claimed, reasonable costs associated with providing potable water are considered an allowable cost to the nonprofit food service account.

Water may be served chilled or at room temperature; however, students may find the water more palatable if it is served chilled. The water must be served plain; therefore, adding flavoring, including fruit and vegetables, is not allowed.

Location of and Access to Water

Potable water must be provided during meal service where reimbursable meals are served (including cafeterias, classrooms, courtyards, auditoriums, etc.). The location of the potable water must be in the meal service area or immediately adjacent to the meal service area.

For Example: *A water fountain that is immediately outside the door of the meal service area (and is accessible to all students during the lunch period) would meet this requirement.*

The water fountain must be operational and able to provide potable water to students in a reasonable time during their meal period. You must ensure that students have enough time to use the water fountain during their meal period. Students should not have to wait in long lines.

If a school uses a water fountain to provide the students with potable water, they are allowed to require the students to raise their hand to get up and go to the fountain. This method is not ideal. However, it may be used as long as it is used to provide order and a student is not denied the opportunity to obtain water. All students should be able to use the water fountain in a timeframe that still allows enough time for consumption of the meal.

The CE must provide cups for the students to get the water if the water is provided in a bulk container (i.e., a five gallon dispenser). This is not required if the school is using a water fountain to provide the water to the students. Students may, at the decision of the CE, provide their own cups, bottles or drinking vessels to fill with water. However, this must not be a requirement. CEs must provide cups at no cost to the students. Students cannot be required to bring their own cups for water provided in a bulk container.

Reasonable Costs of Providing Water

Providing water would be an allowable charge to the nonprofit food service account. However, the cost must be reasonable. The cost must be a result of sound business practice and competitive prices. The cost must be reasonable, necessary and allocable to the Federal school meal programs to be an allowable cost. In determining whether a cost is a reasonable and necessary cost associated with providing water, a CE should ask the following questions:

- Would a prudent person find the cost to be reasonable?
- Is this cost at a fair rate or do alternatives exist that may be more cost effective?
- Is the cost a significant deviation from the established practices of the CE which may unjustifiably increase costs borne by the nonprofit school food service account?
- Could the CE defend this purchase to TDA?

***For Example:** The cost of providing pitchers or cups that would be filled with potable water from the faucet or providing them to students to fill with potable water from a faucet is a reasonable cost. Some schools may want to provide water bottles to students or other alternatives; however, the CE would need to determine whether such an option would meet the requirements for an allowable cost (i.e. necessary, reasonable and allocable) and meet the specific needs of the CE.*

Additionally, a cost is generally not reasonable if it adds materially to the value of the school building and related facilities or appreciably prolongs its intended life, as those types of costs are capital expenditures and should be borne by the CE's general fund. While the cost associated with major plumbing would likely add to the permanent value of the school building and is typically a cost that should be borne by the CE's general fund, the addition of a water fountain to allow for compliance with the statutory potable water requirement makes the cost

acceptable. Moreover, equipment to filter water (e.g., a reverse osmosis filter system) could be reasonable depending on the cost, the need for such equipment and if the CE

1. has sufficient funds,
2. is lacking in capital improvement funding, and
3. is spending the funds necessary to carry out the mission of the program.

It is difficult to assess reasonableness without knowledge of the specific cost and an understanding of that cost. Many costs have to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis in order to determine if the cost is truly reasonable; in such cases, the CE should contact TDA for guidance.

The cost of a five gallon dispenser could be an allowable cost, as long as the CE has determined that providing water in a five gallon dispenser would be cost efficient and practical.

CEs must not charge students for cups in order to access water. Charging students for cups would be considered restricting access to potable water.

Providing Potable Water in other School Nutrition Programs

CEs must make potable water available to students at Seamless Summer Option (SSO) sites; however, this is only required at SSO school sites. SSO sites not located at schools are encouraged, but not required to provide potable water.

Potable water is also required during the Afterschool Care Snack Program (ASCP).

The requirement to provide potable water specifically applies to the NSLP; however schools are encouraged to make water available during the breakfast meal service

Food Safety

Water dispensers must be monitored and properly refilled and sanitized. School food service staff would be responsible for maintaining all of their equipment which would include dispensers.

Compliance

TDA will assess compliance with the meal pattern requirements based on a nutrient analysis of one week of menus. CEs are required to be in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements beginning July 1, 2012. TDA will use the SY 2012-2013 to assist the CEs to be in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements. The Administrative Review will include nutrient analysis of menus and compliance with the new meal pattern beginning in SY 2013-2014.

TDA has the discretion to take fiscal action for repeat violations of

- the new meal pattern implementation,
- food quantity, or
- nutrition standards.